

PROSPECTUS

OF A

~~4-26-30~~

NEW TRANSLATION

4-26-30

OF THE

HOLY BIBLE

FROM CORRECTED TEXTS OF THE ORIGINALS, COMPARED
WITH THE ANCIENT VERSIONS.

WITH

VARIOUS READINGS, EXPLANATORY NOTES, AND
CRITICAL OBSERVATIONS.

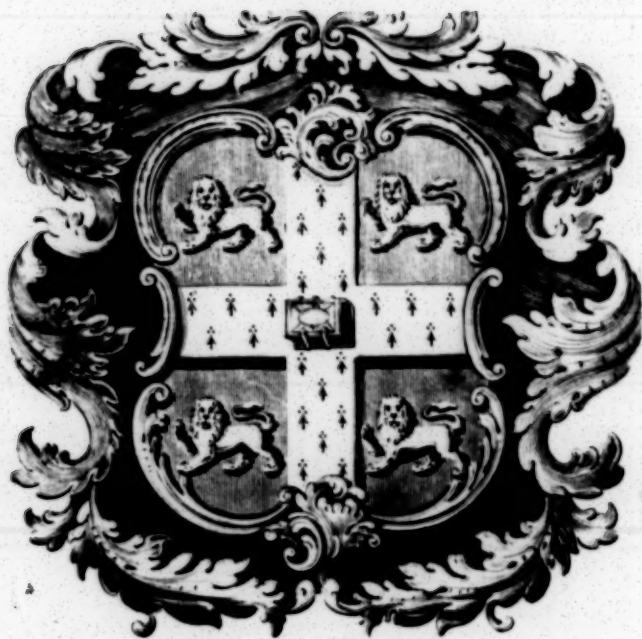
BY

The Rev. ALEXANDER GEDDES, L.L.D.

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TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

L O R D P E T R E.

PERMIT me, MY LORD, to present you with the first fruits of many years painful labour; in the pleasing hope of being, one day, able to lay before you the whole harvest. That *these* or *that* will be worthy of your LORDSHIP's and the PUBLIC's acceptance, it would be presumptuous in me to say, but is extremely natural for me to wish. Meanwhile, I have the honour to be, with very great respect,

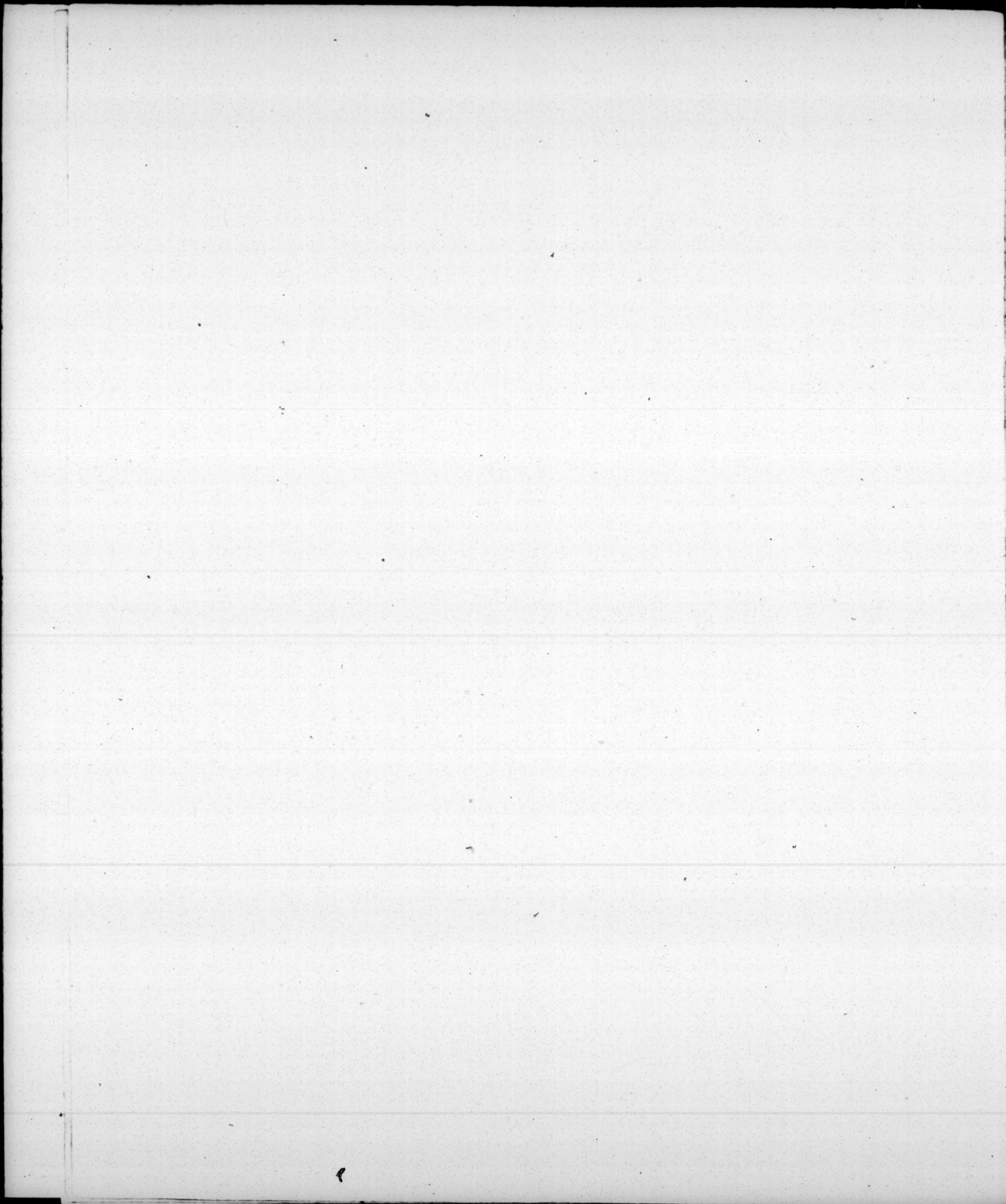
My Lord,

Your Lordship's

Ever grateful and

(Most obedient humble servant,

A. G.



TO THE READER.

THE following Prospectus was fairly written out for the press nearly two years ago. This, it is hoped, will account for some things being added in the notes, which, perhaps, might have been more properly incorporated in the text. In reading over the printed sheets, I have observed some typographical errors, the principal of which are corrected on the reverse of this leaf: but there is a mistake page 100 line 15, that needs to be apologized for. An edition of the New Testament is there said to have been mentioned before, although it is not mentioned till afterwards, in the note, p. 131, which the reader is requested to attend to.

TYPOGRAPHICAL ERRORS.

- Page 32. in the note read—*Septuaginta*.
36. in the note read—counsil.
38. l. 10. read—a more correct.
63. l. 11. read—persuade.
110. l. 5. read—translators.
116. l. 9. read—Oecumenius.
121. l. 5. read—*memoires*.
137. l. 19. read—exclude.

P R O S P E C T U S
O F A
N E W T R A N S L A T I O N
O F T H E
H O L Y B I B L E.

HAVING long made the HOLY SCRIPTURES and the languages in which they were originally written, my particular study, I ventured, some years ago, to give an *Idea* of a new Translation of the whole BIBLE; at the request of a person of distinction, who wished I would undertake such a work. That sketch, imperfect as it was, meeting with the approbation of some of the most learned and respectable characters in the kingdom, I have been since advised by my friends to publish a more ample *Prospectus*; and, for many reasons, I find myself strongly disposed to follow their advice.

For although it must be yet some considerable time, before the Translation itself will be ready for the press, there can be no impropriety in letting the learned public know, that it is preparing; and putting it in the power of those who choose it, to help me with their

counsel and assistance, in the prosecution of so laborious and arduous an undertaking.

That a new Translation of the Bible, particularly of the Old Testament, is still wanted, I shall assume as a position generally agreed upon. To explore the causes that have concurred to render former Translations defective, and to point out the means and method by which a part of their defects may be removed, is the intention of this PROSPECTUS; which I now deliver to the public, with all that anxious diffidence, which the great importance of the subject and the mediocrity of my abilities demand.

The first and principal cause of the imperfection of almost all modern Translations of the Bible is to be sought for in the imperfection and incorrectness of the originals, from which they were made; for, when the text to be translated is itself corrupted, the translation must necessarily participate of its corruption: but modern translations of the Bible have, almost all, been made from a text in many places corrupted: How then could they fail to be, at least, equally faulty?

It is an assertion no less strange than true, that the text of scarcely any profane author of note has been so incorrectly published as that of the Hebrew Scriptures. To restore Demosthenes, Tully, Virgil, Horace, as nearly as possible, to their first integrity, no human pains have been spared: libraries have been ransacked, manuscripts collated, parallel places compared, history, geography,

criticism alternately called in to assistance: and happy was the man who, after a length of time, and with immense labour, could fill up the smallest chasm; detect the most insignificant interpolation; rectify a single transposition; alter a single sentence, or change a single letter to the improvement of his favourite author. This sort of labour gave celebrity, during the two last centuries, to many persons of real genius and learning; and although, in these days of pretended refinement and philosophy, we are too apt to call them pedants, and to depreciate their studies; yet to them we certainly owe a great part of the pleasure which we find in perusing the works of antiquity.

But why were not the same pains taken, and the same means employed, to give a correct edition of the Bible? and how is it, that, of all edited books, it still remains the most incorrect that ever came from the press? Was it accounted of less importance than the rest? Not so: both Jews and Christians, the orthodox and the separatist, equally considered it as the richest treasure they could possess; as a code of laws and a system of morality delivered to them from Heaven; the object of their belief and the rule of their conduct; in short, the Book of books; compared with which, all other compositions are trifling and vain.

Were the editors, then, ignorant or careless? Quite the contrary: many of them were men of uncommon erudition; and all of them boasted of the incredible pains they had been at, to give to their

several editions, as great a degree of perfection, as can be attained by human industry. This was their uniform language, from Bomberg to Vanderhooght; and it must be allowed that, in some respects, their diligence was, at least, equal to their learning.

Had they exerted the same talents, and taken the same pains to correct the text, by such helps as yet remained; as they employed to preserve and embellish it, in its state of depravation; we might have, long since, been in the possession of a copy of the Hebrew Scriptures, as nearly perfect as, at this distance of time, we can reasonably look for; and freed, at least, from innumerable imperfections that still disgrace it: but the more those men laboured, the less they may be said to have advanced; and we scruple not to affirm that the celebrated edition of Amsterdam in 1705, is a less valuable copy of the primitive Hebrew text, than that which was printed at Soncino, nearly 300 years ago*.

It could not, indeed, well be otherwise. The editors, or at least the correctors of the press, were generally Jews; entirely devoted to their rabbinical prejudices. By these they appretiated the manuscript that was to serve as an archetype for the impression. The Masora was to those text-torturers the bed of Procrustes, to the exact length and breadth of which every word was to be fitted with the greatest precision; and, this pretended standard being once established as infallible, all posterior editions were judged to be accurate

* In 1488. See Fabricy *Titres Primitifs*.

or erroneous, only as far as they agreed or disagreed with it.

To some it may seem hard to conceive, how the learned of the Christian persuasion should have adopted the same ideas; and, in this point, given implicit credit to a set of men, whom, in almost every other respect, they believed to be the vilest impostors. Several causes, however, concurred to beget and propagate this gross delusion.

The study of Hebrew, which had been but little cultivated among Christians, even in the brightest periods of Christianity, had now for many ages been almost totally neglected. The first teachers of it, on the revival of letters, were Jews, or converts from Judaism. These failed not to impress upon the minds of their too credulous disciples the highest ideas of the learning of the Masoretes, and of their scrupulous attention to preserve the sacred records from every shadow of error, by means of a certain canon of divine origin, traditionally handed down to them from their great law-giver Moses; or, at least, from the prophet Ezra. Independent of this canon the scriptures were, they affirmed, a locked-up treasure. The Masora was both a key to open, and a hedge to guard them: the very grammar of the language in which they were written could not be learned without it.

The scholars of those pedagogues became pedagogues in their turn; and as we are ever apt to think that method of attaining science the best, which we have followed, especially if it has been a painful one, they inculcated to their pupils the absolute necessity

of pursuing the same rugged and thorny path, which they had themselves pursued before, as the only one that could lead, directly and infallibly, to the sanctuary of holy writ. Thus, with the first elements of Hebrew learning, were propagated in the Christian schools the most ridiculous notions of the Rabbins; and no one called in question their bold assertions, because no one supposed he could know any thing of the matter, but through them*.

Besides, it was a flattering consideration to those who believed the Bible to be from God, to think that God had provided for it a perpetual safeguard, which should secure every word, syllable, letter, and apex from all sorts of corruption or alteration, to the end of time. They did not think of enquiring how this same security had, for so many ages, been itself secured; nor did they reflect, that, if it had ever been the intention of the Deity to preserve, in a miraculous manner, the primitive text of scripture from such accidental errors, as all other writings are liable to, it would have been more agreeable to what we know of his wisdom, to have made the miracle accompany the text itself, than, leaving the text to common risks, have provided a separate oral canon, by which it

* Hence it soon became a sort of axiom among theologians, that a thorough knowledge of the Hebrew could not be acquired without the aid of the Masora; and that none but a skilful Masorete could give a good edition of the Bible. These prepossessions were so deeply rooted, that they kept their ground for almost three centuries, and are not yet quite eradicated. They were adopted, in part, even by F. Simon; in other respects, a critic of great acumen, and no way a slave to inveterate opinions.

might, from time to time, be rectified, and which should have the wonderful privilege of being liable to no corruption; a canon, too, so prolix, so intricate, and so confused as the Masora *.

Nor did they call to mind, that those of the first Christians who had studied the Hebrew, while it was yet, in some measure, a living tongue, were totally ignorant of such a canon; and knew of no other rules for correcting the scriptures, but a careful collation of the best manuscripts, and the use of a sober criticism. They overlooked even the obvious argument which they might have drawn from a comparison of the New Testament, their own peculiar code, with the Old, which more particularly appertained to the Jews. For the former, they could not be ignorant, God had provided no such security; why should he have done it for the latter? giving more to the figure than to the reality, and preferring the son of the bond woman to that of the free? To these, and other absurdities, connected with this opinion, they did not attend: it was enough for them that it flattered their prejudices and favoured their belief: that alone was sufficient to give it a general currency.

It is not, however, probable that so base a metal could have long continued to circulate, if it had not received a new degree of

* The English reader, who wishes to have some idea of the Masora, may consult *Simon's critical history of the Old Testament*, *Prideaux's connections*, or *Kennicott's second dissertation on the state of the Hebrew text*.

credit from the revolution in religion that happened soon after. The Protestants, on separating from the communion of Rome, seem to have thought they could not get at too great a distance*. Finding it convenient to appeal from the decisions of a living assembly to the dead letter of scripture, they considered themselves as under a necessity of maintaining, that the scripture-text was not only incorrupted, but even incorruptible; and as the Masoretic system favoured this hypothesis, they adopted it without hesitation, and defended it with more pertinacy than even the Jews themselves. To recede from it in the smallest degree, was, they imagined, to open a door for Popery, by overturning this fundamental article of Protestantism, "That the scripture alone is a sufficient and infallible rule of faith."

So generally diffused, and so strongly rivetted was this prejudice, that when Capellus first ventured to unclinch it, in his *Critica Sacra*, he was accounted a sort of apostate from the sound doctrine of the reformed churches, and could not find a Protestant bookseller to print his work. And, what is still more strange, when

* Many other instances could be given of this disposition to run into extremes. "Some of our reformed brethren" (says Bishop Berkley in the character of Crito) "because the Romanists attributed too much to the fathers, seem to have attributed too little to them, from a very usual, though no very judicious opposition." Min. Phil. Dial. vi. Sect. 27.—Reynolds thought it a sufficient reason to reject altogether the use of the cross, because the Papists had *abused* it; and some of the Scotch Calvinists had such aversion to liturgies and set forms of prayer, that they would not use even that of our Lord.

Dr. Kennicott, not many years ago, published his excellent *Dissertations* on the state of the Hebrew text, those were not wanting, even in this country, who brought the same charges against him as had been formerly brought against Capellus; nor did it depend on them, that the greatest literary undertaking of this, or indeed of any other age, was not quashed in its very beginning, as hurtful to Christianity.

It cannot be denied, that the Catholic divines in general formed a sounder judgment of the state of the Hebrew text than the generality of Protestants. Whether it was always a sincere love for the truth, or sometimes an excessive partiality for the Vulgate version, that made them so keen and clear-sighted in discovering the faults of the original, I will not take upon me to determine: but the fact is certain, they generally judged rightly of the then state of the original; and there are few passages of it impugned as erroneous by Bellarmine, Gordon*, Morinus, &c. which are not now acknowledged to be so by the most learned Protestants.

From this, however, it is true some Catholic writers drew conclusions, that were by no means fairly deducible. They argued,

* James Gordon (commonly called *Huntlaeus*, because of the Huntly family, to distinguish him from another Jesuit of the same name of the family of Lefmore) was one of the most acute and artful adversaries of the present Hebrew text. It was to oppose his little tract *De Verbo Dei*, that Glassius wrote his *Philologia Sacra*. Gordon's style is clear and concise; and his arguments generally conclusive. It must be confessed, however, that he extols the Vulgate above measure, and advances some unsupportable propositions.

that, because the Hebrew text was in many places corrupted, where the Vulgate was not; therefore the Vulgate was, every where, preferable to the Hebrew text. The strange misconception of a decree of the Council of Trent gave rise, or at least new strength to this absurd opinion. That Synod had declared the Vulgate to be an authentic version of the Scripture, in the plain and obvious sense we shall see in the sequel; yet the word *authentic* became a subject of eager controversy in the Catholic universities: some affirming it only meant, that the Vulgate was in general a faithful version, containing nothing contrary to faith or morality, and having every thing necessary to constitute an authentic document; while others contended, with more zeal than prudence, that it implied an absolute and exclusive authenticity in the strictest sense of the word; which gave it a preference and superiority not only over all other translations, but also over the originals themselves. It is to be remarked that this last opinion was that of the most ignorant, the former that of the most learned of the Catholic theologians; and that they, who were the foremost in depressing the Hebrew text to enhance the value of the Vulgate, were the least of all qualified to appreciate the merits of either. At present there seems to be but one opinion on this subject; and that is, luckily, the right one.

With regard to the state of the Hebrew text, there has of late been a wonderful revolution in the minds of men. Protestants and

Catholics seem to have changed sides; and while many of the former, in every country, find *errata* in it by thousands, there are some of the latter, who can hardly discern in it any error at all. Thus it is, and thus it always will be, where parties are concerned. What is particularly relished by one, will, for that very reason, be disliked by another; and few, very few indeed, will be found, on either side, to hold that golden medium, beyond which the truth is vainly sought for. Here the truth is, at least so to me it appears, that the original Hebrew text is neither so very much corrupted as some Catholics of former, and many Protestants of latter days affirm, nor yet so void of errors as some Catholics of this, and almost all the Protestants of the last age maintained it to be. Still, however, its most strenuous advocates, whether Catholic or Protestant, will now, we presume, be obliged to confess, that it is evidently more or less erroneous*; and, consequently, that it is the

* The sticklers for the absolute integrity of the Hebrew text have so often changed their ground, and assumed so many different positions, that it requires, if not great skill, at least much patience to continue the contest with them. Their first grand palladium was the *Mafora*, under the protection of which they deemed their fortrefs impregnable. Capellus did not, like Ulysses, rob them of their sacred guardian; he stormed their citadel in despite of her, and revealed to the wondering world her impotency to defend them.—Forced from this hold, they took possession of another. “Let it be granted,” said they, “that the *Mafora* is of rabbinical, not divine authority; yet the wonderful uniformity of all the Hebrew manuscripts, and their perfect agreement with the printed copy is the strongest evidence of the integrity of the latter; and implies, if not a miraculous preservation of the text, an attention in the copyists that borders on a miracle.” This was long a capital and a favourite argument. It was an argument founded on a matter of fact, which even Capellus did not

first duty of a translator to examine into, and ascertain its errors, to trace them up, if possible, to their source; and endeavour to remove them by every mean in his power.

chuse to deny; because it was asserted with such confidence, and because he had no direct proofs of the contrary. In vain he attacked them with other weapons; in vain he proved that the ancients had frequently read otherwise than we do; in vain he shewed that the present reading is often improbable, sometimes seemingly absurd: still the pretended uniformity of all the copies was considered as an unfurmountable obstacle, even by many of those who, in other respects, acknowledged the full force of Capellus's reasoning; and, thus, his opponents insultingly triumphed, under the security of a mere presumption. When, by an actual examination and collation of manuscripts, they were at length driven out of this post also, they sought security for themselves, by trying to make their adversaries invidious; and held forth to the public the dreadful consequences to religion, if it should be once allowed that the Scriptures had not come down to us in their full original purity. In this new mode of warfare, they employed stratagems not much to their honour. They imputed to the defenders of the opposite system, views which they never dreamed of, and sentiments which they openly disavowed. The advantage that arose from such disingenuous artifices, could not be of long duration. The discerning public soon perceived the weakness of an argument merely negative, opposed to facts and demonstrations; and the popular odium, which its abettors had endeavoured to throw on others, was turned into a stream of ridicule against themselves. They now seem disposed to give up the divine authority of the Masora, the miraculous preservation of the text, and even its absolute integrity through any means whatever: but still they strenuously defend the absolute superiority of the present printed copy, to all other copies or versions: and maintain, that we have no right to alter or correct it, even on the authority of manuscripts. Hear their reason. "The first editors of the Hebrew Bible had manuscripts as well as we, and probably more ancient and correct manuscripts than now exist: the new critic-collators have not yet found one so correct, in the whole, as the printed copy; therefore, the printed copy is not to be corrected by manuscripts confessedly more erroneous than itself." Never was the abuse of logic carried to a greater excess. We will grant, what perhaps we should not grant, that the present printed text is, in the whole, more correct than any single manuscript: does it hence follow, that, in every particular part, it is more correct than all the manuscripts together; or even than some one individual manuscript, singly considered? Had the first editors accurately described the manuscripts they used, and

All the corruptions, that get into the text of any writing, are owing either to design or oversight. Whether or not any parts of the Hebrew scriptures have been designedly corrupted, is a question, that was early agitated in the Christian church; and, for the first four centuries, the affirmative seems to have been the prevailing opinion, among both the Greek and Latin fathers. That opinion, which the authority of Saint Jerom * and Saint Augustine had, in a great measure, rendered obsolete for many ages, has, in modern times, been revived and warmly defended by critics of the first abilities, and as warmly opposed by others of equal celebrity.

indicated the repositories they were to be found in; we should have it in our power to compare them with the printed text, and with one another, and be able to form a better judgment, both of the fidelity of the editors, and of the respective merit of their manuscripts; or, if these no more existed, we should know, at least, that they are lost. As things are, the fairest inference we can draw, and the most favourable judgment we can form is this, that the editors followed the best manuscripts they could find. But so did all other first editors, if they were not fools: yet it has never, I think, been affirmed that posterior editions, of any other book but the Bible, might not, and may not still, be improved by a collation of more manuscripts; should these even, taken separately, be less correct and valuable than the first that were used. But what if I should assert that there are several single manuscripts of the Hebrew scriptures; any one of which is a more correct copy of the original, than the printed one? what method would they take to redargue my assertion; and by what criterion could the question between us be rationally decided? By none other, I presume, than analogy and circumstantial evidence, examined at the bar of sound and sober criticism.

* This father is not always consistent with himself. Sometimes he positively charges the Jews with having wilfully corrupted the text; at other times, he seems to exculpate them of this grievous accusation. We will not say, with Simon, that when he accuses them he speaks against his own sentiments; but rather suppose, that he afterwards changed them, as many other honest men have done.

There is this observable difference, however, in their respective modes of reasoning. The former support their sentiment by positive arguments and indisputable facts; whereas the latter ground theirs, chiefly, on negative improbabilities, and the dangerous consequences which flow, they pretend, from the opposite hypothesis. I shall have occasion, elsewhere, to treat largely on this subject: at present I shall only say that the truth still appears to be in the middle. For although we should not, perhaps, easily admit that so many passages have been designedly corrupted, as a certain class of writers would have us believe; yet it cannot, I think, be well denied, that there are, in some instances, such strong marks of wilful contamination, as to leave little room for doubt.

But by far the greater part of Biblical corruptions, are to be ascribed to the same ordinary causes, that produce them in all other writings; the ignorance, the carelessness, the inaccuracy of copyists; and as the number of such corruptions, in any writing, is generally in proportion to the number of years it has existed, and the number of times it has been copied; is it to be wondered that the Hebrew text of the Bible should, at this day, contain a very great number of such corruptions? It would be a wonder indeed, if it did not: for how could it be, with any shew of reason, imagined, that a book so old as the Bible; written in a language, that has long since ceased to be vernacular; transcribed by so many different persons, in so many different places; and under so many

different circumstances and situations; through all that vicissitude of fortune, that has attended the Jewish people; should have contracted no spot nor blemish, in the course of two thousand years? That waters, which have rolled for ages through a thousand different soils and channels, should be still as pure and untainted as when they issued from their primitive source, would be far less wonderful, than that the Hebrew scriptures should have remained in their first integrity.

Beside these circumstantial and extraneous causes of mistake, that are more or less common to them with all old writings, there are others which make the Hebrew scriptures particularly liable to chirographical errors; and which may be called intrinsic sources of corruption. At one period, the whole text was changed from the Hebrew to the Chaldee characters*. Many of the letters in both alphabets have a strong resemblance to one another; and, in, some of them, the diacritic marks are hardly distinguishable. The invention of vowel-points, by rendering the genuine vocal elements quiescent, gave frequently occasion to throw them out as useless; and that very thing, which was absurdly looked upon as the chief preservative of the sacred text from future errors, largely contributed to make it still more erroneous.

If, with all this, we take into consideration the colloquial tauto-

* This at least is the common belief; and the arguments that have been urged against it, appear not sufficient to overturn it.

logy of the Scripture stile, the frequent occurrence of the same words and phrases, the repetition of the same or nearly the same sentences, the proximity and contiguity of the same terminations, the constant return of the same particles, pronouns and proper names, and the deceptions continually arising from the association of ideas, similarity of sounds and equivalence of meaning, we shall be obliged to confess that it was scarcely possible for the most diligent and attentive transcriber to avoid committing many oversights.

That many such oversights have been actually committed, and that a great number of corruptions have, by that means, gradually crept into the text, are positions which have, of late, been so invincibly established, that no one, we trust, will in future presume to call them in question. But let not this alarm the pious reader, as if the authenticity of the Scriptures were thereby weakened, or their authority rendered precarious. Were it necessary, to constitute an authentic deed, that the most recent and remote copies of it should be exactly the same with the first autograph, there would be no such thing in the world as any ancient authentic deed, of which the autograph had been lost: there could be no such thing, without a continual miracle. It is enough, that there is sufficient evidence of its being essentially the same with the original; and that the changes it has undergone, whether from design or accident, are not such as can affect its authority, as a genuine record.

Such, precisely, is the case of the Hebrew scriptures. Notwith-

standing all the various corruptions of whatsoever sort, that now disfigure them; it is as certain, as any position of this kind can possibly be, that they are still essentially the same; and that the whole historical tenor of the divine oeconomy towards man has been preserved in them, without any important alteration, to the present time. Take the most modern and most imperfect transcript of their originals, that now exists; or even the most erroneous copy of the most erroneous version, that ever was made from them; and you shall find in it every thing that is absolutely necessary to constitute an authentic writing; and to answer all the great purposes, for which they were intended *.

* From this acknowledgement, made by all those who have been the foremost to detect the corruptions of the Hebrew text, some persons have drawn this ridiculous conclusion; That it is therefore unnecessary, nay unexpedient, to correct it at all. Since it is allowed, say they, to be still essentially the same, and to contain every thing necessary to salvation, what need is there to trouble the peace of the world with collations, amendments, &c? The anonymous French author of a series of petulant and declamatory letters, addressed to Dr. Kennicott, urges this argument in the following extraordinary manner: "If the great articles of the Christian faith are untouched in the text which we already have, why disturb the church with corrections and innovations that are of no service to religion? What advantage will accrue to Christians from knowing, that *Jacob* is written sometimes with a *vau* and sometimes without a *vau*? Or that in the word *David* there was no *jod* before the Babylonish captivity? Is the incarnation of Jesus Christ the less true for that, &c." No; nor would it be less true, if the entire book of Job or the Song of Solomon were wanting. The chain of religion would be uninterrupted without either, yet we should be exceedingly sorry they were lost. We can make a shift to do without the original text of Ecclesiasticus; although it is devoutly to be wished that it still existed. There were once many pieces of Hebrew scripture, of which we have not now even a translation: will it be said that, because the incarnation of Christ can be ascertained without their aid, it would be of no utility to

For beside the internal marks of genuineness, which they supereminently possess; they are supported by such a continued and closely connected chain of external evidence, as is not to be met with in favour of any other composition whatever. Who, but the paradoxical Hardouin, ever doubted of the authenticity of Plato's dialogues; or Demosthenes's orations? yet they have come down to us with not half the number of vouchers, that accompany the Jewish writings; and it would be easier to find ingenious arguments to prove that *those* were invented by the monks in the thirteenth century, than that *these* were fabricated at any particular period.

It is true they have been transmitted with many errors, and are at this day extremely incorrect: but, here again, they have an advantage over most other writings; the means of correcting them are more obvious and abundant. What these are, and how they are to be employed, it is now time to enquire.

The first source of emendation of any writing is the collation and comparison of manuscripts; a source but recently opened with respect to the Hebrew scriptures; and not yet so deeply explored, as we hope it will soon be.

religion, that they could still be recovered? Every thing must be of utility to religion that tends to corroborate the great charters on which it is grounded, or to restore them to their original purity, were it but the addition or retrenchment of a single letter. For the rest, there are few of the amendments proposed to be made in the Hebrew text from the collation of manuscripts, of so very little importance, as those which this flippant superficial writer has selected for the object of his unseasonable gibes.

Hebrew manuscripts are of two sorts, the one written in the old or Samaritan, the other in the new or Chaldee characters. These are two collateral branches from the same stem; two copies of the same original instrument, under the guardianship of two different peoples*, jealous of one another, abominating one another; and, therefore, altogether unlikely to enter into any collusion. Yet, as both copies were the same at the beginning, they still remain so in all essentials; and reciprocally vouch for one another's authenticity. It was the saying of St. Augustine, that the Jews, through a particular dispensation of Providence, were the Christians book-keepers. In like manner, the Samaritans may be said to have been book-keepers to the Jews; and I will venture to affirm, that they have been the best keepers of the two. The Samaritan scripture, as far as it goes, (for it contains only the Pentateuch) must appear to every one, who examines it with any degree of attention, and void of rabbinical prepossessions, a far more faithful representative of the prototype, than any Masoretic copy, at this day extant.

It is, indeed, only of late, that we knew the full value of this long latent treasure. The first edition of it was published by Morinus, in the Paris polyglott, in the year 1645; and only from one manuscript. The variations of that manuscript, from the present Hebrew text, were reprinted more accurately, by Houbigant, in

* I have ventured, after B. Lowth, to use the plural of this word; which in some cases seems to be necessary, and is perfectly analogous.

1753. Since that time, seventeen other manuscripts have been collated, either in the whole, or in select passages; by the aid of which, the greatest part of the errors, that are in the first printed copy, may be corrected; and the futile objections of Hottinger and his followers effectually obviated.

Although the Jewish manuscripts are of less utility, in restoring the true text, than the Samaritan; having been all written posteriorly to the introduction of the Masora; and, for the most part, remodelled by the same exemplar of it; yet they afford many important readings, with regard to the sense; and of grammatical corrections a number almost infinite. This last advantage alone deserved all the labour and expence that have been bestowed in collating them; and the world is principally indebted to the liberality of this nation, and to the indefatigable perseverance of the late Dr. Kennicott for so useful a work. The prejudices at first raised against it, by ignorance or mistaken zeal, are daily dying away; and its value must rise, in the estimation of the learned, in proportion as it is known and examined.

Notwithstanding Dr. Kennicott's various readings were collected from upwards of six hundred manuscripts, and all the printed copies he could procure, yet the harvest is far from being over. A very large supplement is promised by De Rossi of Parma*, from

* The first volume was published last year, 1784; and, besides a very sensible preface, canons and *clavis*, contains various readings on the three first books of Moses. The second volume will be published in the course of the present year.

more than four hundred manuscripts, some of which are said to be of the seventh or eighth century; as well as from a considerable number of rare and unnoted editions: and, no doubt, there will be still plentiful gleanings, even after De Rossi; especially, if ever the repositories of the East happen to be freely opened, and men of learning and enterprize be found to avail themselves of the occasion. Meanwhile, let us be heartily thankful for the riches we already possess, and employ them to the best advantage.

A-kin to the various readings of Hebrew manuscripts, and of much the same utility in correcting the Hebrew text, are the parallel places of the text itself; and the quotations made from it at different times, whether by Jewish or Christian writers*.

By parallel places, we mean those passages of Scripture, in which the same precept is reiterated; the same historical fact repeated; or the same canticle, psalm or prophecy, entirely or partially reinserted. When, in any of these cases, there is a manifest contradiction, or glaring inconsistency, between the two passages, we may conclude, that one of them, at least, is corrupted; and it is the province of criticism to determine, from circumstances, where the error and where the truth lies. Examples, not a few, may be seen in Houbigant, Kennicott, Starck, &c.

With regard to quotations; if we were sure, that they had al-

* We speak here only of such quotations as have been made from the original, whether exhibited in Hebrew characters, or in those of any other language.

ways been extracted from books, they might be considered as so many various readings, of equal estimation with those found in manuscripts of the same antiquity; but it may be suspected that they were, sometimes made from memory; and, therefore, they are to be examined with care, and adopted with caution. It cannot, however, be denied that they are frequently of use in restoring the true reading; and it were to be wished that a still more ample collection were made of them than has yet been done*.

Another most copious source of emendation of the Hebrew text, are the translations that have been made of it, at different periods, and in different languages; which, while they serve, in general, to evidence its authenticity, enable us, at the same time, to correct, or even restore many particular passages, that are now either entirely lost or strangely corrupted: an advantage which belongs not, in the same degree, to any other ancient writing.

To illustrate this by an example—It is well known, that Longinus's celebrated treatise on the sublime has come down to us erroneous and imperfect. But if it had been accurately translated into Latin, while it was yet entire and uncorrupted; and if many

* The various readings in the Talmud and other rabbinical writings were collected with great care by Gill, and inserted in Dr. Kennicott's Bible. Montfaucon had, long before, gathered what scattered fragments of this nature he could find among the Greek and Latin fathers, or in the margin of manuscript Bibles; and published them in his Hexapla in 1713. To these some additions were made by Bahrde in 1769; and many more might still be made, if some new Montfaucon would arise, to ransack old parchments with the same industry and judgment.

ancient copies of that translation yet remained, it would be no difficult matter to restore by them, in a great measure, the true sense, if not always the very terms of the text of Longinus. Let us, now, suppose that, instead of one Latin translation, we had three or four; and as many more in Greek, different only in dialect from that of the original; and that all those versions were not only accurate and faithful, but strictly and even servilely literal; in such a case, every one must be sensible, that it would be hard to avoid hitting upon the true text of the author*. That this case is fully applicable to the text of the Hebrew scriptures will appear from the following concise account of the principal ancient versions.

The first of these, both in time and dignity, is that which we call the Septuagint or LXX. (it should be LXXII.) from the number of persons, who, according to some of the too credulous ancients, were employed in making it. The most judicious critics now laugh, with St. Jerom, at the fable of Aristeas; yet they are not agreed among themselves, about many questions relative to this famous version. Without entering, at present, into a discussion of those knotty points, I shall only say, in very few words, what appears to me certain, or most probable.

* The works of Aristotle are much in the same predicament with those of Longinus. The best Greek editions of them are extremely imperfect, for want of good manuscripts. But, if we could recover compleat copies of the Syriac and Arabic versions, which we know were made of them from the originals, it is not to be doubted that many of the erroneous and obscure passages of that useful author, would thereby be corrected or illustrated. See B. Lowth's preface to Isaiah.

First then, That the Greek version, called the Septuagint, is not all the work of the same translator or translators, is manifest, from the very great diversity of stile and the various modes of translating, that prevail in it. The arguments from authority, produced in support of the contrary opinion, need no other refutation, than a bare inspection of the books themselves: for who, that has ever looked into them, will venture to affirm, that the Pentateuch, Ecclesiastes, Amos, and Jeremiah were translated by the same persons? Not to mention that the most unexceptionable authorities, those of Josephus and Philo, are on the other side.

Secondly, The Pentateuch, or five books of Moses, called emphatically the Law, seems to have been translated in the reign, and, probably, at the request of Ptolemy Philadelphus, by certain Jews of Alexandria; assisted, perhaps, by some of their brethren from Palestine.

Thirdly, The other books were all translated between that period and the birth of Christ; or, at least, soon after: but where, by whom, or at what particular aera, we can, for the most part, form only vague conjectures.

At whatever time, or by whatever persons the Greek version was compleated, it was certainly of great authority among the Hellenist Jews, and, for a time, read in their synagogues instead of the Hebrew. To give it the higher degree of credit, and to justify an innovation which was not approved of by some of their brethren,

the ridiculous tale of the seventy cells, &c. seems to have been invented. The Christians, who have, in all ages, been more or less the dupes of Rabbinism, readily believed the ill-contrived story; and thence concluding, that the translators were inspired persons, considered their work not as a mere version, but as a second divine original *.

It was early translated into Latin, and became the text-book of the Western, as well as of the Eastern churches. It was the only copy of the Scripture they generally used; and the only one they appealed to in all their controversies. They particularly, and most advantageously employed it in confuting the Jews themselves, from whom they had received it; proving to them from it, by the most irrefragable arguments, that their expected Messiah must have already come, in the person of Jesus Christ.

On this, even the Hellenist Jews began to entertain an unfavourable idea of it; and, at length, had it in such abhorrence, that a national fast was instituted to deplore the same event (the anniversary of its being translated) which they had before commemorated by a solemn festival. Whether this sudden change in their minds was altogether owing to the above circumstance, and their deeply-rooted hatred to the Christians; or whether it might not partly arise from the real differences, that were now found (no matter how

* This opinion was the prevailing one as late as the fifth century, and St. Jerom gave great offence by calling it in question.

they had come there) between it and the Hebrew text; or whether, in fine, the Christians, on their part, had, through a mistaken zeal, made some little alterations in it, to make it speak more explicitly the language of Christianity*, it is hard, at this day, to determine: but the fact is indisputable; and, even before the end of the first century, the Septuagint version was depreciated by every Jewish writer, and expelled from every synagogue.

It was to supply its place, that Aquila of Pontus, first a convert from Paganism to Christianity and then a proselyte to Judaism, undertook a new Greek version of the Bible for his new brethren. It appeared about the year 129, and was so well received by the Jews, that he was encouraged to give, soon after, a more correct edition of it, accompanied with a commentary, that rendered it still more palatable to them. On the other hand, the Christians reprobated it as a dangerous and disingenuous attempt to overthrow the authority of the Septuagint, and charged him with having wilfully corrupted, or mistranslated, even his own originals. The character given of him by St. Jerom, in whose time his version was extant, is not always the same. Sometimes † he calls him a contentious and captious interpreter, who affects to weigh words and syllables, and crowds his translation with unheard-of solecisms: at other times, ‡ he praises his diligence and exactitude; denies that

* Of this I think there is at least one example preserved by St. Jerom. *Comment. in Habacuc.*

† Ep. ad Pammach.

‡ Ep. ad Damasum.

he is so captious as he is called; and makes no scruple to prefer him to all other translators. To judge from the fragments that now remain, the first of these opinions is evidently the right one. He is an uncouth, barbarous writer, the Arias Montanus or Malvenda of his day; who seems to have purposely chosen that servile mode of translating, to hide the malevolence of his views, and to make his strict adherence to the letter of the Hebrew a plausible pretext, for deviating so widely from the old version. We regret, however, that his translation is lost, as it would have been singularly useful both for discovering the state of the Hebrew text at that time, and giving us the literal meaning and etymology of many words, the signification of which it is now difficult to ascertain; although, independently of these considerations, it was hardly worth the saving*.

Perhaps the Jews themselves were sensible of the too great servility, and consequent obscurity, of Aquila's version; and therefore wished to have another, that should be equally favourable to their prejudices, without being so unintelligible and disgusting. This, we may suppose, produced the translation of Theodotion,

* The loss of this version was chiefly owing to a cause that seemed rather calculated to preserve it. The Emperor Justinian, on forbidding the Talmud, now become the favourite book of the Jews, gave them full leave to use the version of Aquila, which they had formerly extolled as a faithful and accurate translation: but a sort of obstinacy, not entirely peculiar to Jews, urged them not only to reject with contempt what was thus freely offered to them; but even, probably, to destroy all the copies they could find of it; and which were mostly in their own possession.

which he published about the year 184. This writer, who had been first a disciple of Tatian, then a Marcionite, and lastly a Jew, retained as much of the old Alexandrian version, as he saw for his purpose; and only altered, added, or retrenched, where he found it differ from such Hebrew manuscripts, as the Jews put into his hands. This was a sly device, and operated according to his wish. The Jews were well pleased with his version, because it was conformable to their ideas; and the Christians were not offended, because it so much resembled the Septuagint. In many particular passages, and in one whole book*, they preferred it to the Septuagint itself; especially after Origen had made use of it to correct the supposed faults of the latter; in order to make it tally with, what he thought, the *Hebrew verity*. Hence it is, that much more of this version has been preserved, than of Aquila's.

Towards the end of the same century, or early in the next, appeared another Greek translation, less literal and infinitely more elegant, than either of the foregoing ones. It was the work of Symmachus; who, if we may believe Eusebius, from being a Samaritan, became a Jew; from being a Jew, a Christian; and from being a Christian, an Ebionite. In this last communion, and for the use of its members, he composed his work, which he afterwards seems to have remodelled, in a second edition. The version of Symmachus is, often and deservedly, praised by Eusebius and St. Jerom;

* Daniel.

and the latter seems to have made it, in a great measure, the pattern of his Latin translation. It was, indeed, remarkable for its perspicuity and propriety, as well as elegance; and no good reason can be assigned for its not having been more generally adopted, but that its author belonged to a sect, who were equally hateful to both Jews and Christians. Many excellent works have perished from a similar cause.

Besides these Greek versions of the Old Testament, there are three others mentioned by the ancient fathers; called the *fifth*, *sixth*, and *seventh*; because their respective authors or editors are not known. They seem to have comprehended only, or chiefly, the poetical books of Scripture. Whether they were made by Jews or Christians, it is hard to say; although the sixth bears strong marks of Christian extraction; or, perhaps, it was only an interpolated edition of the Septuagint*.

However that be, it is certain that all those versions were collected by the indefatigable Origen, and placed, together with the Septuagint and original Hebrew text, in his famous Hexapla: and this, perhaps, is the last entire copy of them that ever was made. For the Talmudists having gradually excluded all Greek versions from the synagogues, and the Christians universally adhering to the old translation, the rest were either totally neglected; or only such parts of them copied into the margents of Bibles and com-

* This may, one day, be the subject of a particular discussion.

mentaries, as were deemed the most worthy of attention*. Thus it was that the Septuagint version triumphed, at length, over all its rivals, and remained, for several ages after, the sole Scripture standard in all the Christian churches†.

We are not, however, to imagine, that it was exactly the same in every church, or that any church possessed a copy of it that was perfectly correct; much less, that any such copy now exists. It had contracted many blemishes in the days of Origen; and it was principally with a view to remove them, that he designed and executed the most celebrated of all his works. No man could be better qualified for such an undertaking; to a strong constitution, a clear head and a most prodigious memory, he had joined an immense and universal erudition, by the most assiduous and incessant application that, perhaps, ever was made. His insatiable thirst for learning made him pry into every corner, for rare and curious books; and the liberality of his rich friends put it in his power to purchase them.

With all these advantages, he begun, about the year 231, to compile his *Tetrapla*; which contained, in so many separate co-

* Of all such fragments Montfaucon composed his *Hexapla*; a book indispensibly necessary to every Biblical student; and of which a new and more compleat edition is greatly wanted.

† The reader who wishes to form a proper idea of the Septuagint version, will do well to consult Hody *de textibus originalibus*, &c. Vossius *de 70 interpretibus*, Grabe's *Prolegomena* to his edition of the Alexandrian manuscript, and *De variis vitiis*, &c. Father Simon's *Critical history of the Old Testament*, Fabricy's *Titres primitifs*, and Doctor Owen's excellent *Dissertation* published a few years ago.

lums, and in the following order, the four Greek versions of Aquila, Symmachus, the Septuagint and Theodotion. It would have been well, perhaps, if he had contented himself with this first laborious compilation; which was alone sufficient to immortalize his name, and would have been much more easily handed down to posterity, than the great and over-grown work that superseded it. It would have been even more useful; for as yet he had not assumed the province of correcting the text of the Septuagint; but had given it, just as he found it, from the best manuscripts he could procure.

But the very considerable differences, which he could not but observe, between it and the three other versions, so lately made from the originals, and so nearly agreeing with one another, made him suspect that it was much more erroneous than he had formerly thought it; and set him on meditating a work that should, both by its magnitude and importance, totally eclipse the former one. This produced, in succession, the *Hexapla*, *Octapla* and *Enneapla*; so denominated from the number of columns, that each contained. In the *Enneapla*, which had nine columns, the three last contained the three anonymous Greek versions before-mentioned; the four, immediately preceding them, were the same with those of the *Tetrapla*; and, in the two first, stood the original text in Hebrew letters, with its pronounciation by its side in Greek characters: both, such as he received them from the Jews: for his knowledge

of the Hebrew was, by far, too scanty, to enable him to do without them; and he never suspected, that they might, possibly, impose upon him; any more than St. Jerom did, afterwards, on a like occasion.

Emboldened by his new guides, he ventured now to *flash with his desperate hook* the venerable texture of the old version; and to patch and piece it, with the more recent manufacture of Theodotion, much in the same manner as Clarius and some other moderns have patched the Vulgate*. This had bad consequences. The great authority of Origen made every one, who was possessed of a Greek Bible, revise his copy by the Hexaplar standard; and, in a short time, no manuscript, that was not bristled over with asterisks and obelisks, lemnisks and hypolemnisks, was accounted of any value.

If the autograph of Origen still remained, or if the art of printing had then existed, to circulate at once a great number of accurate copies, we should have less reason to complain of the confusion that thence ensued. His distinguishing marks, without adulterating the Septuagint, would have indicated the then state of the Hebrew text, and put it in our power, even at this day, to appretiate both †: whereas, through the carelessness of ignorant transcri-

* *Sed, quod majoris audaciae est, in editione Septuaginti Theodotionis editionem miscuit.* Hieron. praef. in Paralip.

† *Et haec quidem signa, si studiose semper a librariis servata essent in manuscriptis, non exiguum inde fructum caperet Critica sacra; at mox, pro librorum socordia et negligentia, omissa sunt; unde maxima in libris Graecis orta est confusio.* Starck, *Davidis Carm.* vol. 1. p. 152.

bers, or the caprice of future correctors, the disorder grew every day greater and greater; until, at length, it became irremediable.

For other persons, less capable than Origen or his editors Pamphilus and Eusebius, set about correcting the *common* * copies, after their example. The principal of these were Lucianus and Hesychius, whose authority, whatever might be their abilities, vied almost equally with Origen's. The exemplar corrected by Lucianus was used in all the churches from Antioch to Constantinople. At Alexandria, and all over Egypt, the corrections of Hesychius were adopted; while the Christians of Palestine stuck tenaciously to the Pamphilian copy of the Hexapla †; which, in the end, seems to have generally prevailed through all the East.

From which of these copies, or editions, the particular manuscripts, now extant in different parts of the world, are derived; and what manuscript deviates least from the old original version, it is impossible to determine, or even to guess, until the manuscripts themselves be collated and compared. This is, at present, the greatest *desideratum* in sacred philology; and had the Author of this Prospectus a fortune sufficient to travel for that purpose, he would think it well employed, were it equal to that of Croesus: nor should his present undertaking, great as it is, prevent him from execut-

* The uncorrected edition of the Septuagint was, after the days of Origen, known by the name of *common*, κοινή as we call, now, the Latin version of Jerom, the Vulgate.

† Hieron. ad Chromat. cvii.

ing a project so nearly connected with it; and from which it would, undoubtedly, derive a greater degree of perfection *. Meanwhile, we must make the best use we can of the printed editions, and of such various readings of manuscripts as we can procure: not neglecting even the secondary translations that have any degree of antiquity †.

We have four different edited exemplars of the Greek version; That of Alcala or the Complutensian, that of Venice or the Aldine, that of Rome, and that of Oxford.

The first was printed in the polyglott Bible of Ximenes in the year 1515, with a typothetical attention, that would put the most patient modern compositor in a rage. It is accompanied with an

* I have been told that a very learned gentleman of the University of Cambridge had, some time ago, expressed his readiness to undertake such a work, if he should meet with due encouragement. Is it possible that he has not, or will not meet with due encouragement, in a country, where the most trifling novelty draws, every season, from the purses of the good people of England, a far greater sum than would be adequate to the purpose? With five thousand pounds, I would, undertake, in less than three years, to collate every valuable Greek manuscript of the Bible in Europe.

† Great hopes are entertained of being able, in some measure, to restore Origen's copy of the Septuagint, together with the other Greek versions that composed his Tetrapla; by means of a Syriac version, made from them in the seventh century; a considerable part of which is preserved in the Ambrosian library at Milan. It contains the Prophets and *Agiographa*. The first part of this manuscript is, with great probability, said to have been once in the possession of Masius; and from it he drew his Hexaplar readings, in his commentary on Joshua: but what is since become of it, no one, it seems, can tell. Even then it had been mutilated of the Pentateuch; of which, however, there is an Arabic version, in the Bodleian library at Oxford. May we not expect the publication of this Pentateuch, from the zeal and abilities of the present Arabic Professor? That, with Mr. Norberg's transcript from the Ambrosian volume, would be a most valuable present to the Biblical student. See Professor White's letter to the Bishop of London; or Bp. Newcome's preface to the minor Poets.

interlineary verbal translation, and is of all the Greek editions the most consonant with the present Hebrew text. The editors boast of ancient manuscripts, and ancient manuscripts they surely had; but, as they neither tell what those were, nor how they used them, we draw little satisfaction from this general information. It is even justly suspected, that they did not scrupulously adhere to such manuscripts as they had; but that, to make their edition correspond, as nearly as possible, with the Hebrew and Vulgate, with which it was classed in the same page, they gleaned from every quarter a medley of a version, that was neither one thing nor another. It is astonishing that such a copy should have been republished in the Antwerp and Paris polyglotts.

The edition of Venice was first published in the year 1518, by the heirs of Aldus. It was professedly printed from very old, but undescribed manuscripts; with which however its editors seem not to have taken the same freedom, as those of Alcalá had taken with theirs. It is, evidently a much purer copy of the Septuagint; although not without many foreign admixtures; especially from Theodotion. It has been often reprinted, with variations and pretended corrections; sometimes for the worse. The best editions of it, beside that of Venice, are those of Basil and Frankfort.

The Roman edition, begun in the pontificate of Gregory XIII. and compleated in that of Sixtus V. (who while a cardinal had pressingly urged the work) appeared in the year 1587. It was prin-

cipally taken from the famous Vatican manuscript; and, where it failed, from others of nearly the same antiquity; and is, by many, thought to be the most genuine copy of the old Greek version, that has yet been published. Had the learned editors been more attentive, to exhibit their prototypes exactly as they found them; we should have been still better pleased with their labours: for it is now certain, that they sometimes deviated from their manuscripts; but uncertain, where and how much they deviated. It has been lately proposed to the present Pope, to have the Vatican manuscript republished, exactly as it is; and even in the same form and characters; and it is with the greatest pleasure we learn that his Holiness has not only approved of the proposal, but has also taken upon himself the whole expence of the impression. This does great honour to Pius VI. and will contribute more to immortalize his memory, than any other event of his reign; his journey to Vienna not excepted *.

The Roman edition, together with Nobilius's Latin version, first separately published in the year 1588, was, by order and at the expence of the Gallican clergy, reprinted at Paris, under the inspection of Morinus, in the year 1626; and again in 1641. We are

* We are just now informed, but hope the information is false, that this most laudable design has been traversed by the Roman inquisitors; and that, through the councils of a Greek bigot, the Vatican manuscripts are, in future, to lie on their dusty shelves, untouched and unexplored. If this be true, Ghosts of Carafa, Passionei, Spinelli, Affemanni, arise! and drive these Goths and Vandals from the precincts of your old dominion.

certainly indebted to the zeal of the French Bishops for procuring so elegant and correct an edition of a book that had become extremely rare, and was hardly to be purchased: but the obligation is considerably diminished, if it be true, as Serravius and others affirm, that this edition prevented Ducaeus from giving the infinitely more useful one he meditated*.

When Walton published the London polyglott in the year 1657, he judiciously adopted the Roman edition of the Greek version, instead of the Complutenfian; and this, with other things, contributed to give his polyglott a decided superiority over all the rest. It was also republished at Francker by Bos in the year 1709, in one thick quarto volume; and again at Utrecht and Amsterdam by Millius in 1728, in two volumes, small octavo.—All the other editions of London, Cambridge, Amsterdam, Leipfick, &c, are spurious, and most grossly interpolated.

The last, but not the least important, edited exemplar of the Septuagint, is that which was printed from the celebrated Alexandrian manuscript in the British Musaeum; of equal antiquity with that of the Vatican, and, in some respects, more valuable.

* Fronton Ducaeus (Fronton le Duc) a Jesuit of Bourdeaux, the most learned editor of the first Greek and Latin Chrysostome, and one of the best critics of his age, had planned, it seems, a new edition of the Septuagint; in which it was his intention to restore, if possible, the genuine exemplar of Origen, with all its diacritic marks: but the Parisian editors of the Roman exemplar, alarmed at the project, which would in effect have impeded the sale of their copies, did all they could to counteract it, and were unluckily but too successful. The materials which he had prepared were ordered to Rome, and have never since been heard of.

It was prepared for the press by Grabe, with a care and candor that have not often been equalled, never surpassed; but which, we trust, will be henceforth faithfully imitated by every editor of manuscripts. The first and fourth volumes were, by Grabe himself, published at Oxford in folio and octavo in the years 1707 and 1709; the second and third by Lee and Shippen, with the assistance of Bishop Potter in 1719—20. It was immediately republished at Leipfick by Reineccius, in 1712, &c; but the most commodious edition of it is that of Zurick, by Breitinger, in 1730. Until the Romans are pleased to give us more correct copy of their manuscript, this edition must be our text-book of the Greek version; and all future collations of manuscripts should be made relatively to it*.

With regard to the various readings already collated, the greatest part of which have been crowded together in the lower margin of Bos's edition, they are not implicitly to be depended on; even when extracted from printed books. In every dubious passage, the editions themselves are to be consulted, and the typographical errors of these always taken into consideration. Of manuscripts, indeed, few general and continued collations have yet been made. The variations of the very ancient Cottonian fragment, now lost, were carefully collated by Grabe, and accurately published by Dr.

* Professor White of Oxford, so well known by his elegant and affecting lectures, has in a letter to the Bishop of London, in 1779, laid down some excellent rules for having a good new edition of the Septuagint; a work very much wanted; and which we wish the learned professor's other avocations would permit him to undertake.

Owen in the year 1778: Dr. Kennicott had collated for his own use several parts of the principal manuscripts at Oxford, and of an old Psalter at Eton: it is hoped they are not lost *. Mr. Woide, at the request of Bishop Lowth, collated, through the book of Isaiah, two valuable manuscripts in the British Museum; one of them, through Jeremiah, for Mr. Blayney; and through the minor Prophets, for B. Newcome. The Author of this Prospectus hopes to procure, both at home and abroad, some similar assistance †; and we expect soon to hear of Birch and Adler having published their copious collections.

It has been said, that we ought not to neglect the ancient versions, that have been made from the Septuagint. Of these the most celebrated is the Latin *Italic*, which chiefly prevailed in all the Western churches during the five first centuries. If an entire and unadulterated copy of this version existed, it would be little less valuable than the Septuagint itself. What parts of it could be found have been collected by Nobilius, Blanchini and Sabbatier.

There are also Syriac, Samaritan, Ethiopic, Arabic and Armenian translations from the Greek, partly printed, but chiefly in

* I have, since writing this, been assured by the Bishop of Salisbury, to whom and the Dean of Christ-church Dr. Kennicott left his papers, that no such collections are found among them.

† While these sheets are printing, I am actually employed in collating a valuable and well-preserved Octateuch, belonging to the University of Glasgow; a particular account of which shall in due time be given to the public.

manuscript; which have their respective uses, towards the same purpose, according to their antiquity and accuracy, and certainly deserve to be made known and appretiated.

But of all the versions made from the Septuagint the Coptic is by far the most useful; both because it is a strictly verbal translation, and because it is of great antiquity. Wilkins published the Pentateuch from three manuscripts in the year 1731. But much, much yet remains to be done; and the arduous task seems to be reserved for Mr. Woide. He is, perhaps, the only man in Europe, who is fully equal to it; and when he has compleated the singular work he has now in hand *, he will, no doubt, be encouraged to set about it †.

Having said this much on the different Greek versions of the Bible ‡, and of their utility in restoring the true readings of the original text, we proceed to the other ancient translations; at the head of which is to be placed the Syriac.

That the Syrians had a version of the scripture, at a very early

* A *Fac-simile* of the New Testament of the Alexandrian manuscript; the most curious piece of workmanship that ever came from the press, now happily compleated.

† He has, with unremitting industry, already procured several Coptic fragments; and expects more from the friendship of the prelate Borgia, the present most learned and amiable prefect of the *Propaganda*; whose zeal to discover, and readiness to communicate useful old writings of every kind, are perfectly congenial to Mr. Woide's own disposition.

‡ Mr. Vilhoison discovered lately a Greek version of the Bible, in St. Mark's library at Venice, entirely different from that of the Septuagint; but, as it has not yet been published, we cannot form a proper judgment of it. It has, however, all the appearance of being a much more modern translation, than even that of Symmachus.

period, is indisputable; although the tradition, that carries it back to the reign of Solomon, deserves no credit. As it is mentioned by the Greek writers of the second century, it must have been then generally known; and may, therefore, without temerity, be ascribed to the apostolic age. Hence it is evident, that a genuine copy of it would be highly valuable; as it would, not only point out the changes which the Hebrew text may have undergone, from the time it had been first translated into Greek; but, also, serve to corroborate many good readings, and correct many bad ones, of both the Greek translation, and the Hebrew original. In this last respect, it would be more useful than any other version. Of all the Oriental dialects, the Syriac approaches the nearest to the Hebrew; and the Syriac translator follows his text so closely and literally, that he may be said to give a transcript, rather than a translation. But his work has had the fate of all ancient books: it has come down to us greatly disfigured, by the negligence of copyists, and the audacity of pretended correctors. It was published, not very faithfully, by Gabriel Sionita, in the Paris polyglott, from a manuscript in the French king's library. The editors of the London polyglott had it partly corrected on three other exemplars: but it is still exceedingly faulty *, and a collation of it with all the manuscripts that can be found, and with the writings of the ancient Syriac fathers, is ex-

* Several letters of the Syriac alphabet are more easily mistaken for one another, than even those of the Hebrew; and this has been one most fertile source of errors.

tremely desirable. I have hopes, that the gentlemen of the Maronite college at Rome may be prevailed upon to undertake a considerable share of so useful a work *.

Of much the same affinity of idiom to the Hebrew with the Syriac, are the Chaldee versions; made for the use of the Jews, after the Hebrew had ceased to be a living language. These are of various sorts and different qualities, from the servile translation to the loosest paraphrase; and from an almost pure Babylonish dialect to the most barbarous rabbinical jargon. They are not, consequently, all of the same utility: yet the very worst of them will be found to have its use; and, even from the dunghill of the Jerusalem Targum, a pearl may be here and there picked up. The most ancient and accurate is that of Onkelos, who translated only the Pentateuch. From a resemblance of name, he has been confounded with Aquila, the author of the Greek version. The Rabbins, indeed, will have their Onkelos to be much more ancient; but there is some reason to think he must have been of a still latter date. Be that as it may, he sticks closely to his text; which, it is evident, could not, in many places, be the same with our present Masoretic copies. Next to him in rank, but at a great distance, stands Jonathan with his Targums. The rest are an obscure and anonymous herd; who seem to vie with one another, which shall advance the greatest absurdi-

* See the note † page 34.

ties. The least ridiculous among them are they, who paraphrased the Psalms and Proverbs.

Although the Arabic versions, at least such of them as have been made from the Hebrew, are of a much latter period than the other Oriental translations; and, therefore, not of the same utility for correcting the originals; yet we cannot subscribe to the opinion of those, who think them of little or no use at all, for that purpose. The version of Saadiah * is as old as the tenth century; and exhibits a faithful though not verbal translation of the Hebrew copies he worked upon. I have found some excellent readings in it; and I wonder that Houbigant should have preferred to it the novel and barbarous African version published by Erpenius. The African version, however, is not without its use. Being extremely literal, it gives us a good idea of the state of the Hebrew text, at the time of its being made; and furnishes us with many etymological helps to discover the meaning of obscure Hebrew words. But a more valuable Arabic version than either of these, made from the Samaritan Pentateuch, lies yet in manuscript; of which a specimen from the Barberini triglott was published by Hwiid in the year 1780.

* I do not here enter into a discussion of those much agitated questions. Whether the Arabic version in our polyglotts be a primary or a secondary translation? whether Saadiah-Gaon be the same with Saïd of Fiumi? or whether he translated only the Pentateuch? These points will probably be the subject of a particular dissertation. It is enough for me at present, that the Arabic version has, partly at least, been certainly either made from, or retouched upon the originals.

There are several other copies of it in Europe; and we join our warmest wishes to those of F. Georgi *, that the joint labours of the learned of all countries and communions may soon give us a complete edition of it. Let F. Georgi himself set the example by procuring a collation of the manuscripts of Italy; which in his present station, he can easily do†. The rest seems to be destined for Woide or Maldenhover ‡.

We come now to the famous Latin Vulgate, which, for eleven hundred years, was the general text-book of all the Western churches; and is still the public Scripture standard, in those of the Roman communion. The first Latin versions of the Bible were made from the Greek of the Septuagint, and as the Greek copies greatly varied, the Latin versions varied still more; because they were not only done from different archetypes, but also by many different hands: for every one, says St. Augustine, who had got a tincture of Greek learning, fell to translating for himself; so that before the end of the fourth century, the translations had become innumerable ||.

To remedy this glaring inconvenience, St. Jerom undertook to

* See his elegant letter to Hwiid, printed with the above specimen.

† I believe he is now General of the order of Dominican Friars.

‡ I am just now told that this gentleman, well known for his German translation of Job, has already collated some of the Arabic manuscripts at Oxford; and continues to enrich his collection from other libraries, particularly those of Spain.

|| See St. Augustine *De doctrina Christiana*, lib. ii. cap. 2.

revise that which was chiefly used, and known by the name of *Italic*, on the most correct copies of the Greek. Having now occasion to consult the works of Origen he soon perceived that the Greek itself was in many places corrupted; or, at least, that it differed widely from the Greek versions, that had been more recently made from the Hebrew; and this it probably was, that gave him the first idea of the necessity of a new translation. For that purpose, he applied eagerly to the study of the Hebrew language, consulted the most learned of the Jewish doctors, compared all the Greek versions with one another and with the original; and, at length, convinced of the insufficiency of the old Latin version, even with all his own corrections and improvements, he seriously set about making a new one, from the best Hebrew copies he could procure. This he accomplished at different intervals, and rather by starts than a continued labour, in the space of fifteen years; amidst many contradictions, reproaches, and the most bitter invectives.

For scarcely had his first essays made their appearance, when the cry from every quarter was set up against them, as a daring and dangerous innovation; that tended to discredit a version so long used in the Latin church, and made from one generally believed to have been the work of the Holy Ghost.

Although Jerom, conscious of the rectitude of his intentions and of the goodness of his cause, despised, at first, the unjust and

invidious cavils of his adversaries; yet they were so often repeated, and countenanced by such high characters in the church, that he was fain to yield to the necessity of the times, and to make apology after apology for his conduct. Still, however, he continued to translate, without following any other order than what the requests of his particular friends occasionally suggested to him. The four books of Kings were first published in the year 391; soon after followed the Prophets; then the books of Solomon, Job, the Psalms, Ezra, Nehemiah, Chronicles; and, last of all, the Octateuch *, about the year 405. By this time, the storm, that had been raised against him, was nearly blown over; and he lived to see his labours applauded by some of those who had been the first to condemn them. In less than a century after his death his version had become of equal authority with its now only rival, the Italic; and gradually grew in estimation, till, at length, it was, with some limitations, universally adopted by the Latin churches.

In many respects it deserved that preference. It had been made immediately from the original, by one who had every necessary qualification for such an undertaking. His learning, whether sacred or profane, was not less extensive than Origen's; his judgment and taste were more correct and exquisite. He had a perfect knowledge of the Greek and Latin languages; and was sufficiently ver-

* The five books of Moses, Joshua, Judges and Ruth.

fed in the Hebrew *. He had correct copies of the Hexapla, if not the autograph itself, before him. He was at no great distance from a famous school of Jewish Rabbins, whom he might consult as he saw occasion. He had traversed the land with his own feet, and seen with his own eyes the principal places mentioned in sacred history. He was acquainted with the manners and customs of the country. He knew its plants, its animals and its other productions. With all these advantages, and his superior talents, it was impossible he should not succeed. He adopted, in general, that mode of translating, which had been before so much admired in Symmachus; and which, indeed, is the best calculated to express the full meaning of the original, without either hurting its integrity, or transferring its idiotisms. His style is plain, easy and unaffected; and, although his Latinity is not that of the Augustan age, it is neither barbarous nor inelegant. In his diction and phraseology there is a peculiar grace and noble simplicity, which it is not easy to imitate; and which no other Latin version, except that of Houbigant, in any degree possesses.

The work of St. Jerom is not, however, completely perfect: alas! what work of man ever was? He frequently renders not all his text,

* St. Jerom's great knowledge of the Hebrew has been called in question by Le Clerc, and warmly asserted by Martianay and others; who, in their zeal for the honour of the holy doctor, forgot, sometimes, the rules of good breeding. Le Clerc's assertions were to be combated by reasonings, not by injuries. St. Jerom certainly knew more of the Hebrew language than any other Western Christian of his day: he knew much more than Origen; but he was inferior, in that respect, to many moderns.

he sometimes gives more than it contains, and he not seldom mistakes its meaning. For the sake of perspicuity he is often too diffuse, and for the sake of brevity he is sometimes obscure. He changes proper names into appellatives, and appellatives into proper names. He makes improper divisions of colons and periods; and, on some occasions, he is either careless or hasty *. Add to this, that he seems not to have been always guided by the same rules of translating. Hence, there is a remarkable want of uniformity throughout: some parts being translated more, others less literally; and some even bordering on paraphrase. But still the greatest imperfection of St. Jerom's version arises from too great a confidence in his Jewish guides, and from his being prepossessed with an idea, that the Hebrew copies were then absolutely faultless. This leads him to blame the Septuagint in many places, where they are not blameable, and where they read and render better than he. But whatever little original flaws may be in this jewel, it is still a gem of great value; and we are perfectly agreed with F. Fabricy, as to the propriety and importance of hav-

* It is astonishing with what rapidity he struck off his translations. The three books of Solomon he calls "the works of three days." That of Tobias he finished in one, although he had it to translate out of a language he did not well know, through the medium of another that was more familiar to him. Such dispatch in a modern translator would be deemed downright precipitation. But this circumstance, while it accounts for some negligences and oversights, is the strongest proof of his comprehensive genius, quick conceptions, and the most wonderful facility in writing that has ever been known. Erasmus, perhaps, came the nearest to him in all these respects.

ing the dirt and straws, that have in the course of time stuck to it and obscured its lustre, effectually wiped away. This can be done only by a collation of manuscripts, and I know no body of men more proper to undertake the work, than the learned of F. Fabri-
cy's own order.

When the Western churches adopted St. Jerom's version, they did not adopt it without reserve. Many particular parts and some whole books of the Italic were still retained; and several corrections from Aquila, Theodotion and Symmachus, as well as from the Masoretic Hebrew were occasionally introduced. This medley obtained, from its general reception, the name of Vulgate.

It has undergone many corrections and alterations at different periods. Towards the end of the eighth century it was revised by Alcuin at the desire of Charlemagne. In the twelfth it was, with the assistance of some Jews, made more conformable to the Hebrew by Stephen abbot of Citeaux *. It was again, in the next age, corrected with great care and labour by the French Dominicans; and enriched with a number of various readings, not only from Latin manuscripts, but also from the Hebrew and Greek copies †. This most useful work, by that conjunctive and subordinate indus-

* Cistercium.

† The autograph of this *correctorium* is to be seen in the library of the Dominicans, *rue St. Jacques*, Paris. A good account of it is given by Fabricy (*Titres primitifs* tom. 11. p. 132.) It is to be regretted that the project of making a fair copy of it, formed in 1749, did not take place; though it is not doubted but it will be resumed and executed in the best manner.

try that distinguishes religious societies, was soon multiplied or abridged over all the Order; and was considered as a sort of canon to correct other manuscripts by.

Whether they, who gave the first printed edition at Mayence in the year 1462, used it; or what manuscript served them for an archetype, it is not known. One thing is certain; the first printed editions are extremely faulty. That which was published in the year 1515, in the Complutensian polyglott, is more correct than any that preceded it; but as the corrections were not always made on the authority of manuscripts, and as the editors have not told us what other sources they drew from, we read it with doubt and distrust. The first who gave a good copy of the Vulgate was the celebrated Robert Stevens. All his editions are correct and beautiful; but that of 1540 is superlatively so. It was made from fourteen described manuscripts, and the three principal printed editions of Mayence, Basil and Alcalá. It was republished with some alterations by Hentennius in 1547; with various readings from thirty manuscripts; which are accurately described. Hentennius's edition was improved by Lucas Brugenfis; and published, with his long promised annotations, in 1580; and again, more splendidly, in 1583*.

Seventeen years were now elapsed since the Council of Trent had

* Of the same year, there is an elegant and commodious edition of it in small octavo. Both are by Plantin.

decreed the Vulgate to be an authentic copy of Scripture; and ordered it to be henceforth (exclusively of all other Latin versions) universally used and appealed to. The charge of having it carefully corrected, and accurately printed, was committed to the Roman Pontif; but little had been done during the troublesome reigns of Pius IV. and Pius V. so that Sixtus V. who was born for great things, had the honour of executing the great commission. He had already, as has been said, given an excellent edition of the Greek version of the Septuagint, in 1587; and he now gave, in 1590 * the first entire Latin Bible that was published by papal authority.

But neither papal authority itself, nor the anathemas denounced against those who should presume to alter the smallest particle of it, could procure it a long duration. The imperious and unpopular Sixtus was hardly cold in his grave, when the copies of his edition were called in and suppressed †; and a new one, with above two thousand alterations, was published, in 1592, by Clement VIII. of which all the other editions, that have since been made, are literal copies ‡.

* The bull of publication is dated in 1589, but the book was not made public till the year after.

† It was pretended that Sixtus himself had resolved on the suppression; but of this there is no proof, and little probability.

‡ When I say *literal* copies, I do not mean that there have been no changes made in the Vulgate, since the Clementine edition. It is well known that many little corrections, and

As to the respective merits of those two editions, the last is certainly more correct and more agreeable to the present copies of the originals; but the first seems to retain more of the old Vulgate, and to be better supported by the authority of manuscripts *. This was probably one of the reasons that induced the Clementine editors to exclude all various readings. Bellarmine was for giving them; but he was over-ruled by his fellow-labourers †. The omission was partly supplied in some posterior editions; but the amendments that had been pointed out by Bellarmine and others, have from time to time been admitted, even into the Vatican impressions; and thence have found their way into most other posterior editions.

* Dr. James, in his *Bellum Papale*, made a minute and invidious collation of the two editions of Sixtus and Clement; from which he and others have drawn conclusions not very favourable to the Roman See. But when the very most they ask is granted them, and when it is allowed that neither of the editions are faultless, does it follow that the Vulgate is not still a most respectable translation; or that the council were in the wrong to prefer it to all other Latin versions, that had yet appeared? I shall have frequent occasions to justify it against the cavils of Amana and other such supercilious and contentious critics; and to shew that it is, in many particular passages, a more genuine copy of Scripture than the present Masoretic text. Indeed the outrageous attacks, made on this famous version by some, not the most judicious, Protestant writers, may have, partly, arisen from a desire of retorting on such indiscreet Catholics, as had thrown unmerited abuse on the original. At present, the learned of both sides are in a fair way of being reconciled, in this one point at least; and seem willing to make mutual concessions. The Catholics are ready to own that the Vulgate is not so pure a rivulet, as some of their too zealous predecessors maintained; and the Protestants as readily acknowledge that the present Hebrew text is not so untainted a source as was long believed. Thus both contribute, in different ways, towards a reestablishment of the true text. Those without hesitation correct the Vulgate by the original, where the Vulgate is evidently faulty; and these make no scruple to make use of the Vulgate in restoring the true text of the original, when the original is evidently or probably corrupted.

† See his letter to Lucas Brugensis.

most ample and valuable collection was published at Antwerp by Lucas Brugenſis in the year 1618: and has ſince been frequently republiſhed, although never ſo correctly. Of latter years, ſince the collation of manuſcripts has been revived, ſome of the beſt Biblical critics have occaſionally had recourſe to thoſe of the Vulgate; and many good readings have been ſelected from them in particular books and paſſages. But a more general collation is ſtill wanted. When that has been accompliſhed, we doubt not but ſome zealous pope will ſee the expediency of having the Clementine edition again reviſed, and made more ſtrictly conformable to the originals, wherever there is no well grounded ſuſpicion of their being corrupted.

A third ſource of emendation of the Hebrew text of the Old Teſtament, are the quotations from it in the New. Theſe by ſome are ranked with the parallel places above-mentioned, to which indeed they have a great affinity. They differ, however, in the following reſpects. Firſt, they are in a different language. Secondly, they are not always made from the original; but more frequently from the Septuagint; and often, probably, from other early verſions. Thirdly, they are ſometimes quoted in ſo vague a manner, that we are at a loſs to know whence they were taken; or whether they were meant as ſtrict quotations, or ſimple inferences. As a ſource of emendation, therefore, they are to be uſed with great circumſpection; and the various readings, that may ſeem to ariſe from them,

are rarely to be adopted; and not till every circumstance has been weighed with an equal and patient hand. With these precautions, they may be of considerable use; and we are greatly obliged to Dr. Randolph, for giving us so accurate a collation of them with the Hebrew text and Septuagint version. It was published at Oxford, with his learned annotations, in the year 1782.

The writings of Philo and Josephus, the two principal Jewish authors of antiquity, after those of the Scripture, have also been reckoned among the sources from which some corrections of the Hebrew text may be drawn. The former, who was cotemporary with Jesus Christ, cites, indeed, many passages of Holy writ; but as he was an Hellenist of Alexandria, and evidently but little acquainted with the Hebrew dialect, we may suppose he followed the Septuagint; and therefore, although his quotations are useful, for corroborating or correcting the readings of that version, they can be but of second hand utility towards the amendment of the original.

Not so with regard to Josephus. He has given us a continued history of the Jews, extracted from the Hebrew copies of their own canonical books; and, at first, partly written by him in the Hebrew language. Now, although it is not improbable that he had also before him the Septuagint version, when he composed his Greek history, we cannot suppose that he would, on any account, prefer it to his originals; and the only fair conclusion we can draw from

his disagreeing with our present Hebrew text, where he agrees with the Septuagint, is that our present Hebrew text and his Hebrew text are not the same: consequently, where he deposes against the present text in favour of the Septuagint, there is great reason to suspect that the former is corrupted. I say, reason to suspect; for it by no means amounts to a certain proof; both because the texts of Josephus and of the Septuagint have their corruptions too; and because there is a probability, at least, of such copies, as we now have of the one having been in some places retouched, and made agreeable to those of the other. It is pretty plain, however, that this is not always the case; and it has been clearly shewn by Kennicott and others that the work of Josephus is often a useful commentary, sometimes a good *correctorium* of the Hebrew scriptures—Let me add, that it forms a precious link in the long chain of evidence, that supports their authenticity.

In fine, when the corruptions of the text cannot be removed, either by the collation of manuscripts, or the aid of versions, internal analogy or external testimony; the last resource is conjectural criticism.—“Conjectural criticism!” exclaims the scripture-zealot, “are we then to mend the word of God by conjecture, and substitute our own ideas for the dictates of the Holy Ghost?” Have patience for a moment, and hear at least what may be urged in favour of the conjectural critic. Let us first state the question as it ought to be. The conjectural critic does not assume the province

of *mending the word of God*: his aim is to purify it as much as possible from all human admixture: he wishes not to substitute his own ideas for the dictates of the Holy Ghost, but to restore those dictates to their first integrity. His wish is certainly pious, and his aim commendable; it remains to be seen, how far he is likely to be successful.

I say then that there are cases in which the text of an author may be corrected and restored by mere critical conjecture; sometimes with the utmost certainty, sometimes with great appearance of it, and sometimes only with probability. A few examples from the first English book that comes to hand will put this out of all doubt.

If you should read in some faulty copy of Addison's first dialogue on medals, "Cynthio, Eugenius and Philander had *terited* together "from the town" (which might very easily happen from the strong resemblance in print of the letters *r* and *t*) would you wait for the authority of a manuscript to restore these letters to their proper places and read *retired*? Again, if you read, "Their design was to "pass away the heats summer," would you hesitate a moment to supply the words *of the*, or at least the word *of*, between *heats* and *summer*? Once more, if the following words in the same dialogue were thus printed, "among the fresh breezes that from rise the "river," would you deem it any temerity to put *rise* before *from*, where it evidently should be placed.

In the above examples, the emendations would be all of the utmost certainty. I will now produce some that would be the next thing to certain. Suppose we read, in the same place; “and the agreeable *ture* of shades and fountains,” we must perceive that something is wanting before *ture*, and we shall have little doubt that it is *mix*. Again; “in which the whole country naturally”—*naturally*, what? why, most probably, “abounds:” though, absolutely, it might perhaps be some other synonymous word.

But there are cases where the emendation would be but barely probable, as in the following example: “They were all three well versed in the politer of learning, and had travelled into the most nations of Europe.” We know some word is wanting after *politer*, but we can only form a probable conjecture what word it is. It is probably *parts*, it may be *branches*; but some such word it must be. It is still harder to say what word should precede *nations*, or whether there is not a word too much in this part of the sentence: for we may fill it up by inserting the word *refined* between *most* and *nations*; or by throwing out the word *the* before *most*: and both emendations would be almost equally probable.

It would be easy to bring similar and still more striking instances from the Latin, Greek and other dead languages; but these, I presume, are more than sufficient to evince, that the text of an author may be corrected, sometimes with certainty, and sometimes with probability, from conjecture alone.

This, indeed, will be readily allowed with regard to other writ-

ings; but the BIBLE! the BIBLE! Is the original text of the Bible to be corrected in the same manner? With a proper deference and due distinction, I answer, undoubtedly it is. If in Ben-chaim's edition of the Hebrew text, for example, one of the commandments had been thus expressed; "Thou shalt commit adultery," as it is said to have been once printed in an edition of the English Bible: must posterior editors have waited for manuscript authority to restore the negative particle? Or if, in the example adduced by Houbigant, it were written in our present text, through a mistake not unfrequent with the Masoretes, "Thou shalt adore thy God, and "*not* serve him." Must that wicked *not* remain there, because we have no manuscript at hand to correct it by? Surely, surely, he must be scrupulously fearful of profaning the Scripture, who would reject an emendation, that rescues the Scripture itself from evident impiety; under pretext, that it is but a conjectural correction*.

* To make this matter still more evident, and to expose the absurdity of those who maintain, that no conjectural emendations of the Hebrew text are admissible; let us put the case, that our English Bible were the original Scripture; and that in all the copies of it, whether printed or manuscript, the sixth verse of the second chapter of Ezekiel run thus (as it actually does in an edition I have seen:) "Though briars and thorns be with thee, and though "thou dost *well* among scorpions; be not afraid, &c." Let us also suppose that this reading were prior to all translations made from the supposed original, and could not, consequently, be rectified by their means; would a critic of the smallest penetration, sufficiently acquainted with the grammar and genius of the English language, and who had maturely considered the context and the scope of the prophet's words, be at a loss to perceive, or unwarranted to affirm, that a *d* had been dropt out of the text, and that the original reading must have been *d'well*? Or, should he find (as Archbishop Secker found in the edition he used) in Philip. i.

It is true, however, that all criticism, and particularly sacred criticism, has its due bounds; and nothing is more easy or more common, than to exceed them. A young man of genius and application, who has got a certain tincture of Greek and Hebrew learning; and is able, with the help of a Lexicon, to read his Bible in the original, is but too apt to think he has made wonderful discoveries; and fancies he has hit on the genuine meaning of a thousand obscure passages, that had escaped every prior translator. But if he possess but a small share of good sense, and be not too eager to publish his crude essays, he will soon begin to perceive that he has been precipitate in his march, and will tread the ground over again with a more steady and cautious step. He will not, now, cry out *Eurêka* at the first appearance of a discovery, however specious. He will carefully examine it in every point of view, suggest to himself every objection that is likely to be made against it, and adopt it only after mature discussion and full conviction. By proceeding in this manner, he will certainly make fewer discoveries; but those he makes will be more to the purpose. In proportion as he advances in this difficult and dangerous career, he will move with still greater wariness; become every day more diffident

16. "to add affliction to my bonds;" or in Psalm xxxi. 10. "my life is spent with grief and my ears with sighing;" or 1 Timothy i. 2. "Grace, mercy, peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ of Lord;" would he be rash in conjecturing that *of* should be *our*; *ears*, *years*; and *ad affliction*, *add affliction*? I hardly think that any one in his right senses, would find fault with such emendations; though made without the authority of either manuscript or version.

of his critical acumen; doubt of many of his former assumptions; often find himself constrained to admit as highly plausible, what he had once rejected as absurd; and be contented with offering an opinion, where he had before uttered a decision. Such is the procedure of the sage and sober critic, whether he has to correct his text, or to explain it when corrected.

To give a minute detail of all the rules, and exceptions from the rules, that ought to guide him as he goes along, and which he never ought to lose sight of, would alone make a volume as large as Despauter. But they are all ultimately reducible to the four following general and comprehensive canons, the use of which is not limited to conjectural criticism only; but extends to every other source of emendation.

The first canon is, never to suppose that the text is corrupted, without the most cogent and convincing reasons. For if, as the judicious Rollin remarks, when altering the text of any author is in question, one must be, as it were, compelled to it by a sort of absolute necessity, and have almost an evidence of the corruption; how much more strictly is this rule to be observed, with regard to the text of Scripture?

The second canon is, never to have recourse to conjectural criticism, until every other source has been tried and exhausted; for it would be ridiculous to exert even the greatest ingenuity, in guessing, when we may attain our end, by readier and less deceptive means.

The third—Let all corrections be consistent with the text and with one another; that is to say, let there be nothing in the correction that does not perfectly agree with what precedes and follows, and that is not supported by grammatical analogy.

The fourth—Insert no correction, however plausible or even certain, in the text, without warning the reader, and distinguishing it by a proper note.

These canons strictly adhered to, and discreetly used, we see no danger in correcting the Hebrew text. Nay, until it be thus corrected, we shall never have a good translation of it.

But the corruptions of the present text are not the sole difficulty the translator has to surmount. To ascertain the true meaning is often as hard as to ascertain the true reading; and this has been another great cause of the imperfection of modern translations: a cause which, perhaps, will never be wholly removed.

There is no language so completely copious and distinctive as to have a different *vocable* for every different idea. Our own, after all the refinement it has received, is wonderfully defective in this respect; and we yet want a great number of terms to express the vast variety of our conceptions. Hence it requires no small skill in the art of writing, to avoid, at all times, equivocation or amphibology.

But this is much more sensibly perceived in the Hebrew than, perhaps, any other language. The paucity of its compounds, the

uncertainty of its derivations, the frequent coincidences and similarities of its inflexions, an almost total want of abstracts and modifiers, the many and multifarious significations of the same particle—these and other similar obstacles impede the translator's progress at every step, and oblige him to grope his way with great caution and diffidence.

Besides, even the radical signification of many words is extremely uncertain: nor needs this at all to surprize us. If there are terms and phrases in Shakespeare, who wrote in our own language and touched almost on our own days, already become unintelligible to our best glossarists; how difficult must it be to decypher the words of a language, that has ceased to be a living one for two thousand years; is all contained in one not bulky volume; and of which several words and modes of expression occur but seldom, or only once?

Add to these the difficulties that arise from the great diversity of style in the different Hebrew writers, from references to monuments that no more exist; from frequent allusions to facts that are not recorded or but barely hinted; from proverbial sayings, poetical licences, uncommonly bold metaphors, and obscure allegories: not to mention the very great difference of laws, manners and local usages; which are well known to have great influence on the language of a nation, and must have particularly affected that of the Jews, who, in those respects, so widely differed from all other nations. Whoever considers all this duly, will be convinced, even without

the light of experience, that the route of the Bible-translator is neither smooth nor even; and that it behoves him to walk in it with the utmost wariness.

It may, nevertheless, be confidently affirmed, that the greatest part of those who have entered into it for these last three hundred years, have voluntarily put out their own eyes, and allowed themselves to be led on by the worst of guides. The same imposing set of men, who had the audacity and art to make the Christian world believe that they had preserved the text of their Scriptures in its original integrity, by a pretended enumeration of every word and letter, found it equally easy to persuade them, that the true reading and meaning had also been preserved by the punctuation of every syllable, and the distinction of every pause. This was a second part of that wonderful MASORA, without which the Hebrew text was supposed to be a mere dead letter, a nose of wax, a body without a soul *.

I will not here engage in the much agitated controversy about the antiquity and authority of the vowel points. Capellus, Mafclef, Houbigant and Sharp have nearly exhausted the subject; and the efforts, that have been made to refute their arguments, have only shewn more clearly how invincible they are. The vowel points, whether they be the fruit of the fifth or of the tenth century, are certainly a rabbinical, and, in many respects, but a pue-

* *Nasum cereum, corpus expers animae.* Guarin. praefat. in Gram. Heb.

rile production *. Considered, indeed, as a mere human work they may be allowed to have some little utility. They shew us how the Hebrew was pronounced at the time of their invention.

* To give the reader, who is not acquainted with Hebrew grammar, some, not unfavourable, idea of Masoretic punctuation, let us suppose that the present English version of the Bible were the original; and written, as the original formerly was, in one uniform character, and without any of our modern marks of distinction. In this supposition, the text would run thus:

I N T H E B E G I N N I N G G O D C R E A T E D T H E H E A U E N A N D T H E E A R T H

Let us next suppose that some ingenious pedagogue, remarking the great difference between this orthography and the present orthöepy; and observing, also, that so close and connected an arrangement of words and letters is attended with some difficulty to unpractised readers; should set himself to contrive expedients, to remove those inconveniences; and, for that purpose, should reason in the following manner: "Our alphabet has but five vowels to express fifteen vocal sounds;—Some of our consonants vary their powers according to their situation; and some of them have occasionally no power at all. The same letter is sometimes an aspirate and sometimes not. Many words have more than one signification without any difference in the mode of utterance. Our written language has no pausal marks, and our prosody is not regulated by any tonic distinctions. To remedy these evils, and to fix the true English pronunciation for all time to come, let our fifteen vowel sounds be represented by as many different symbols.

" A open by	T	E short by	∴	O long by	•
" A close by	—	E obscure by	∴	O short by	T∴
" A broad by	T∴	I long by	T•	U long by	• *
" A slender by	—∴	I short by	∴	U short by	∴
" E long by	∴	I French by	∴—	U English	∴

" Then, let the hard sounds of C and G, I and V consonants, and all quiescents be marked with a dot above, and the aspirate H and hissing S with a small horizontal line.—Let all words be separated by proper spaces, and distinguished by proportionate pauses. Let

* The symbols of I short, O long, and U long, are the same; but the first is placed below the line, the second above, and the last in the middle.

They distinguish, although not always justly, the different acceptations of the same or nearly similar words. In our present faulty text, they often supply the want of many formative letters; and,

“ A full pause be marked thus

“ A smaller pause thus

“ A still smaller pause thus

“ And the smallest of all thus

I	}	both below the line.
h		
:	}	both above the line.”
::		

He said, and straightway fell to work: and lo! the whole Bible, in his industrious hands, assumed in due time this rare appearance.

IN THE BEGINNING GOD CRE-
ATED THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH

It is of no importance, whether these symbols, which are indeed the very rabbinical points, are as accurately combined, and adapted to our language, as they might be: they are sufficiently so to express the idea that is meant to be conveyed; and now, my good reader, what think you of this improvement? “ The distinction of words, you will say, is well enough: the “ marks of pausation, though multiplied without necessity, may also have their use: but to “ attempt to fix a pronunciation that is ever fluctuating, and tones that are continually “ changing, by any other rules than the present usage, and the practice of the best speakers, “ is a foolish and fruitless attempt. For how are the powers of these very symbols ascertain- “ ed, but by an immediate appeal to living sounds and the now prevailing modes of utterance? “ If these happen to change, as we know they imperceptibly do, what will be the use of your “ boasted symbols at any future period? and by what canons will their respective powers be “ ascertained? Granting even, that they had, like Ezekiel’s mystic wheels, a living and self-in- “ terpreting spirit within them, that could effectually and for ever arrest so fleeting a thing “ as vocal air; why is their position in the text so awkward and unnatural? Why are they ge- “ nerally placed, not beneath the vowels, the various powers of which they are supposed “ to denote, but beneath the preceding or following consonant?” Stop, my honest friend; you are now quite mistaken: there are, no more, any vowels in the English alphabet. “ What? *a, e, i, o, u*, not vowels?” By no means: they are all consonants; mute consonants!— Have you any thing more to object?—“ I have: Such a motley multitude of pricks and points

thereby, serve to more readily discriminate genders, numbers, persons, moods and tenses; although here, too, the discrimination is often arbitrary and sometimes manifestly wrong. In short, they are a kind of grammatical comment on the text; and, if they had never been pushed forward in any other light, they might have been permitted to hold a subordinate rank among works of the same nature: but to impose them upon us as of divine authority, was the height of impudence, and to receive them as such the height of credulity.

As such, however, they were generally received by almost all

“disfigure the beauty and symmetry of the text, and often confuse the mind, as much as they bewilder the eye; and I dislike every thing that produceth confusion.” Good! But what if our pedagogue had crowded the scene with a whole host more of *regal* and *ministerial* attendants (for so the Hebrew grammarians denominate their accents) with *shakeph-katons* and *shakeph-gadols*; *pashtas* and *karneparas*; *shalsheleths* and *mercakephalas*, and twenty other such barbarous names; of which, although it requires a little code of laws to marshal them, and although Bohlius is said to have in vain employed seven long years for that laudable purpose, yet neither he nor any one else could ever point out the uses? What, if instead of the true English pronunciation, he had given you a Scotch or Irish one? What if even his division of words and sentences were often not only trifling but palpably erroneous? What if other pedagogues, improving on his improvements, had thrown out, by degrees, the original vowels, now become useless lumber; and if instead of GOD, HEAVEN, EARTH, you were presented with GD, HVN, EARTH, bespattered with pricks and patches as above? What if such elisions were called natural anomalies of English grammar? What—“Sweep all that trash away,” you would undoubtedly exclaim, “and give me again the plain old unpointed text of my Bible.”

Such trash is the greatest part of the Masoretic points, which rabbinical pedagogues would impose upon us as the only sure interpreter of the Hebrew scripture! Whoever wishes to see, to what degree of absurdity, or insanity, even Christian writers have been led by this imposition, may read Wasmuth's *Institutions*; Ousef de *accentuatione Hebraica*; or Walter Cross's *Targumical art*, published at London in the year 1698.

Protestant communions *, from this ridiculous notion, that if they were once allowed to be a human invention, the infallibility of the Scripture, as a rule of faith, would be precarious; and the fundamental article of Protestantism be overturned at one blow. This blow, nevertheless, a Protestant divine † was not afraid to strike; and he struck it so effectually, that all the rabbinical learning and dialectical skill of the Buxtorfs were not able to ward it.

But what could not be done by skill or learning, was done by dint of authority. In the year 1679 a special canon was framed at Geneva and adopted by all the Helvetian churches; by which it was decreed that no one should in future be admitted to the sacred ministry, who did not publicly acknowledge the Masoretic text to be divine and authentic; both as to *consonants* ‡ and *vowels*. They had only one step further to go; and that was, to decree the mysteries of the *Cabbala* to be of divine origin.

Although the Geneva canon, backed by reams of annual theses from the Dutch universities, suspended for a while the fate of the

* This is the more remarkable, as the first Reformers and their disciples, for nearly a century, were of a very different opinion (see Hody *de text. original.* p. 553.) But there is a cause for every thing. The dispute about the *Judge* of controversies had been warmly agitated between them and the Catholic party; and they thought they could not better answer some troublesome objections of the latter, than by maintaining that the vowel points were of divine origin. What is still more strange, there were some few Catholics of the same opinion. Even Arias Montanus leans that way; and Postellus went further than ever did Jew or Protestant: he affirmed that God himself had made a present of the *Masora* to Adam.

† Louis Cappel a French Calvinist and professor of the Hebrew at Saumur.

‡ In the language of that time, all the letters of the Hebrew alphabet were called consonants.

Maforetic Dagon, it could not long prevent its downfall. The most learned of all countries were generally on the side of Capellus; and their auxiliary attacks were the more successful, as some of them were deserters from the other party and knew its weakest holds. Still some feeble efforts were made, from time to time, to support the tottering idol: but he now seems to lie prostrate on the threshold of his own temple, never, we apprehend, to be raised again*.

But if we reject the Maforetic points and accents, what shall we substitute in their place? Must we divest the text of every thing but the bare elements, and divide and explain it as we please? Not as we please but as we ought, and in the same manner we should divide and explain any other author. The first part of this task will indeed be easy, if we have accomplished the latter. The true meaning once ascertained, the necessary divisions will readily present themselves: nor is it material whether they be always the most proper that might be found, or not. It is sufficient that they cre-

* The last publication in this country in favour of the Maforetic system is, I believe, the second edition of a Hebrew grammar, in Latin, by Dr. James Robertson, professor of the oriental languages in the University of Edinburgh; printed there in 1783. In the preface, notes and appendix to this work, the learned professor has collected from the Buxtorfs, Leusden, Schultens, Guarin, the French encyclopedists, *Memoires de literature*, &c. the most plausible arguments that have been urged by the punctuists since the beginning of the controversy. The appendix and part of the notes are chiefly intended to combat the opposite system as adopted and defended by professor Wilson of the University of St. Andrews; who had, the year before, published, for the use of his own class, *Elements of Hebrew Grammar*; which, considered as an elementary book, wants nothing to recommend it to the public but a better Hebrew type. His antagonist has been far more fortunate in his printer.

ate no embarrassment or confusion, by disjoining what ought to be connected; or by connecting what ought to be disjoined, as the Masoretic divisions not seldom do *.

The great object, then, is to come at the true signification of every word and sentence; and this, I affirm from experience, we shall better accomplish with an unpointed text before us, than with a pointed one: especially if, in the latter case, we sit down to translate, prepossessed with an idea, that the points are to be our only guides.

I say, "only guides:" for I would not exclude them from the translator's notice. They may occasionally be consulted, not as

* This, indeed, ought to be reckoned among the causes of the imperfection of modern versions. For there is hardly a modern translator, who has not, more or less, been led astray by the present division and punctuation of the Hebrew text; even when the text itself is sufficiently clear and obvious, to make any deviation from it unexcusable. The division of the chapters is often improper, but that of the verses is infinitely more so. We are in many places presented with a full periodical distinction, where there should not be so much as the smallest pause; nominatives are separated from their verbs, adjectives from their substantives, and even letters and syllables are cruelly divorced from the words they naturally belong to. "Nothing," says a sensible writer in the *Critical Review* (vol. xviii. p. 188.) "has been more injurious to the sacred writings, than the common method of dividing them into chapters and verses; by which means the chain of reasoning is frequently broken, the sentences mangled, the eye misguided, the attention bewildered, and the meaning lost." This is, indeed, high colouring; but still the likeness is true: and there are many instances, both in the Old and New Testament, of mistakes and mistranslations from this cause. Absurd as the present divisions often are, there is yet an almost absolute necessity of retaining them, in some shape or other. According to them our Concordances and Indexes have been formed; and references and quotations made for two hundred years back; it would therefore create much confusion to remove such landmarks. But we may remove the evils which they have caused.

oracles, but as opinions; which we may adopt, or reject, as we judge it expedient: but, I believe, we shall rarely, by their assistance, overcome a real difficulty, which we could not have overcome without it. Even their greatest pretended utility, that of supplying a number of servile letters which are wanting in our printed Hebrew Bibles, is in a great measure superseded by the collation of manuscripts; in which we luckily find those very letters, which the punctuists would have us ridiculously believe, were originally wanting in the autographs; although the want of them leaves such grammatical irregularities in the text, as no written language ever acknowledged.

And here I cannot help remarking, that the Masoretic punctuation has been productive of the greatest evil, where it has been credulously supposed to be the most productive of good. The real vocal letters, being once stripped of their vocal powers and deemed quiescent consonants, were gradually thrown out as useless, or omitted as unnecessary; according to the negligence or caprice of transcribers: for what need is there (they probably said) scrupulously to retain a *vau*, when a *holem* or *kibbutz* performs its functions; or a *jod* when its place is so well supplied by a *hirik-katon*, *tzere* or *segol*?* Hence we do not meet with any two manuscripts,

* The *jod* and *vau* are important Hebrew formatives. The first is the characteristic of the masculine plural of nouns and of the transitive voice of verbs, not to mention other purposes which it formerly seems to have served; the *vau* is the characteristic of feminine plurals and

that are alike in these particulars; and by far the greatest number of various readings arise from the accidental or intentional omission of those two letters.

But if the *Mafora* is considered as an unsure and insufficient guide, to lead us to the true meaning of the Hebrew scriptures, what other methods shall we take to attain our end? The very same we take to understand the Greek and Latin authors. We must, first of all, learn the grammar and vocabulary of the language; we must study its peculiar structure and genius; observe its singularities, anomalies, and analogy with other tongues; consult the best lexicons, concordances * and grammatical commentaries; consider attentively the scope, stile and phraseology of every

of two of the participles: but in all these respects they are both wanting, in an infinite number of places, in the present printed text; and this want is urged by punctuists as a proof of the utility, not to say necessity, of the vowel-points. Ye are in the right, Gentlemen! When ye have undermined a building by taking away some of its chief supports, ye must stay it with such materials as ye have; and ye may then insist on their being necessary: but if we can by any means replace the original stone pillars, we shall have no further use for your wooden props.

* Of all the helps towards understanding the Hebrew scriptures a good concordance is undoubtedly the most useful. But we yet want a good concordance; and the man who should devote five or six years to the compiling of one from Buxtorf, Calasio, Noldius, Taylor, Kircher, Montfaucon and Trommius, would do a singular service to Biblical students. Buxtorf's method of arrangement, with very little improvement, should be strictly followed; the errors of orthography rectified from the authority of manuscripts and other sources of emendation; and the various acceptations of the same word in the ancient versions exactly noted and methodically distinguished. Such a work would be worth all the commentaries that ever have been made.

different writer; carefully distinguish the natural from the figurative, poetical from prosaic composition; compare author with author, passage with passage, image with image, trope with trope; so as that all the parts of the whole text may mutually throw light on one another:—and, because the whole text together makes but an ordinary volume, and contains many words and phrases, that occur but once or extremely seldom, we must, for the better understanding of these, call into our aid the other Oriental kindred dialects; the Chaldee, Syriac, Samaritan, Ethiopic and Arabic. The three first have so great an affinity of idiom with the Hebrew, that they may be considered as cousin-germans of the same family; and though the other two are not quite so near a-kin, their relationship is not less evident *. From all of them, therefore, may be derived helps towards investigating the radical signification of obscure words, and illustrating modes of expression that would, else, be inexplicable. A comparative dictionary of all those dialects would be a most useful work. With half the bulk of Castel's, it might be made much more copious and correct; and, to render the analogy more striking, it should, I think, be all in the Hebrew character, like Schindler's pentaglott lexicon. Such a

* The Arabic has one advantage which the other dialects do not, in the same degree, possess. It is still a living language, the most extensively spoken, and, in some respects, the most copious of all languages. There are extant in it a great many elegant compositions on all sorts of subjects, both in prose and poetry; and the study of it has, of late years, been greatly promoted by some of the most learned men of the age.

work I have long had in contemplation*: but alas! *Iter longum, brevis aetas*: We may grasp at immensity in idea; but our span is, in reality, the span of a pigmy.

Until some literary drudge be found, with patience and sufficient leisure to go through so tedious a labour, we must be content with picking from Buxtorf, Schaaf, Crinesius, Ludolf, Mininski, Golius and Richardson, such information as we can get; though we shall be frequently disappointed, and obliged to confess, that the succours, we draw from such sources, are but small, in proportion to the pains they cost us. Etymological conjectures are of all the most fallacious; and it requires much penetration, a nice discerning taste, and a long and serious ponderation of circumstances, to be able, amidst a number of almost equally probable derivations, to determine which is likeliest to be the true one. When we have toiled, for example, through Schultens's tedious and disgusting book of *Hebrew origins*, we have only learned, how little we can learn from such sort of discussions; and are vexed that we spent so much time to so little purpose.

Our next great resources, therefore, after a long analytical and comparative study of the Hebrew language itself, are the ancient versions; which not only afford the best helps for correcting the

* As a proper introduction to such a work, I formed, many years ago, the plan of a *Comparative Grammar of the principal Oriental dialects*; which, by way of relaxation from more serious studies, I am now completing, and preparing for the press—not doubting but the smallest attempt to facilitate the study of those languages, and thereby to promote Biblical knowledge, will be favourably received by the serious part of the public.

text; but are also, in general, the best interpreters of its genuine meaning. I will not say, with Vossius, that, if we had not those versions, particularly that of the Septuagint, we should be able to make no translation at all; but I think it may be confidently affirmed that a translation, made without their aid, would, in many places, be extremely imperfect and uncertain; and that it has happened, by a most singular providence, that they have been transmitted to us in so many different forms; as if for that very purpose. Yet we are not implicitly to follow them, any more than the *Masora*. We are ever to remember that they likewise have their faults and corruptions; and that nearly the same precautions are necessary, when we consult them as interpreters; as when we employ them as *correctoria*. What has been already said of them, in the one respect, is applicable in the other.

Neither are we to neglect the modern versions, whether Latin or vernacular, that have been made since the revival of letters. For although they are almost all made from the present Masoretic text, and consequently participate of all its defects; there are few of them from which a diligent and judicious translator may not draw some advantage: let us here take a short review of them; beginning by those in Latin.

The most ancient *, and, in a great measure, the model of all

* I omit mentioning, such modern Latin translations as are only in manuscript, several of which are said to be extant in different libraries; as also such party-coloured versions as those of Oslander, Clarius, &c, which are only interpolated editions of the Latin Vulgate.

the rest, was that of Santes Pagninus, printed first at Florence in the year 1528. It was the work of twenty five years, and has been greatly extolled both by Jews and Christians, as the best Latin version that ever was made from the Hebrew; that of Jerom not excepted. It is, for all that, a barbarous composition, despicable in almost every point of view, but that of a grammatical glossary: as such it may be of considerable use in giving an idea of the Hebrew idiom, and a superficial knowledge of the language to grown up Biblical students, who are too idle to turn over the leaves of a lexicon, or con their Buxtorf. It was made yet more horridly uncouth by Arias Montanus, who interlined it in his edition of the Hebrew text of the Antwerp polyglott, from which it unaccountably found its way into that of London.

Next, in priority of time, is the version of Munster, which appeared about the year 1534. It is little less literal, but more perspicuous and elegant than that of Pagninus. The rabbins were his chief guides; and his annotations are compiled with no small discernment from their best works.

Of a still purer Latinity and greater perspicuity is the translation of Leo-Juda, commonly called the Tigurine Bible; because it was published by the divines of Zurich. The first edition is of 1543. It has been since frequently republished in different kingdoms; and with some small alterations, even by the Catholic University of Salamanca, in 1584.

Hitherto the new translators of the Bible had moved nearly in the same track; all pursuing, with more or less attention and fidelity, the route which the rabbins had marked out for them; and making the Masora the pole-star by which they steered. Castalio had the courage to strike out a path for himself. He translated, indeed, from the present Hebrew text, but he did not Judaically despise the ancient versions. The principal, and often necessary, supplements which are found in them, but wanting in the Masoretic copies, he inserted with proper distinctions *: nor did he reject those useful and excellent books, which most Protestants have, after St. Jerom and his Hebrew preceptors, too rashly thrown out of the canon and branded with the name of *Apocrypha*; but which, in the most ancient copies of the Greek, Syriac and Latin versions, are intermixed and rank with the other books: and, to connect the Old Testament with the New, he inserted two excellent supplements, abridged from Josephus; the one after the fourth book of Esdras, and the other at the end of the Machabees.

Castalio deviated no less from his predecessors in his mode of translating. They had crept, like timid and ignoble slaves, after an imperious master; he claimed the privilege of walking side by side. His version is bold and free, his style clear and concise, his diction pure and perhaps scrupulously elegant. It was reprobated,

* To additions from the Greek he prefixed a G; to those from the Latin an L; when from both, G. L. An H denoted the end of the addition.

however, in general by Jews and Christians, by Catholics and Protestants, as a temerarious, insolent and even impious burlesque of Holy writ. The theologians of Geneva, with Beza at their head, were particularly harsh in their censures of it. But more cool and candid estimators have given a very different judgment. Simler, Huetius, Buxtorf, Duport, and, above all, Episcopius have borne honourable testimony in its favour; and whoever reads it without prepossession, and compares it carefully with the originals, will, we doubt not, be of the opinion of Dr. Mead, that it is not only a most elegant but also a most faithful version*. Had the author worked upon a better text, retained a little more of the idiomatical simplicity of his originals, and been somewhat less lavish of his oratorical graces and classical refinements, his translation would, altogether, be the first of modern times. As it is, I make no hesitation to give it as my opinion, that a more compleat, more impartial or more faithful version will not easily be found. The best edition is that of Basil, in folio, in 1573.

About two years after, was published a new Latin version of the Old Testament, by Junius and Tremellius; to which, in the second and all posterior editions, was added Beza's translation of the New Testament. It has been often retouched and reprinted, both in

* Quam, habita multis in locis collatione, non modo Latinissimam, sed etiam accuratissimam et ad sensum mentemque dictorum, tam in Hebraeis quam in Graecis, maximè accommodatam deprehendi. Praefat. in Medicam. Sacr.

Germany and in England; and was long in high estimation among Masoretic Protestants: yet it never entirely recovered from the discredit thrown upon it by Drufius, and is now almost sunk into oblivion. It must be confessed, however, that it merited a better fate: and although it deserves not the excessive eulogiums of Poole, it is neither so unfaithful nor so arbitrary as some critics pretend. The reproach of its being a paraphrase rather than a translation, is the worst founded of all reproaches. It often runs into the other extreme, and is, in some respects, more servile than that of Pagninus. To me its chief defects appear to be an impure and barbarous Latinity, an affected mode of construction, and a strange disfigurement of the Hebrew names, to make them agreeable to the Masoretic punctuation.

The famous Cardinal de Vio Cajetan, who, amidst a multiplicity of state affairs, found means to devote a part of every day to serious study, left behind him, among other laborious productions, a translation of a great part of the Bible. As he was totally ignorant of the Hebrew, he employed two learned Rabbins, a Jew and a Christian, as his interpreters; and having a sound judgement and discerning taste, he succeeded much better than could be expected. But his version was formed on this erroneous principle, that a translation of the Scripture cannot be too literal; should it even, for that reason, be unintelligible. This prepossession made him judge unfavorably of the Vulgate; which he often censures without

reason: for which cause some zealots have unjustly taxed him with heresy. His translation has much the same faults with that of Pagninus; and may be of much the same use to the Hebrew student. It was printed, with his commentary, at Lyons in the year 1639.

At the same place, in 1650, was published another Latin version of the Bible, as far as Ezekiel, with a tedious commentary, by Malvenda, a Spanish Dominican. He did well to add a commentary; for, without it, his translation would be often perfectly unintelligible: so barbarous is his style, and so unhappy his choice of expressions. "If any one, says F. Simon, wishes to have a translation of the Scriptures purely grammatical, let him use that of Malvenda." I should rather say, is any one madly fond of a version servilely literal? Let him read Malvenda's; and I shall wonder much, if he be not soon cured of his phrenzy.

A new Latin version of the whole Bible, by Sebastian Schmidt, was published at Strasburg in the year 1696. It is said to have been on the anvil near forty years, and is evidently, laboured with great care and pains. It is clear, concise and not inelegant; and if the author had been possessed of a better text, and had paid some more attention to the ancient versions, his work would have been a valuable accession to the Biblical library. A more correct edition of it was given by the divines of Strasburg, in the year 1708: and it has been since republished, in Germany, along with the Hebrew text.

John Le Clerc, professor of philosophy, belles lettres and Hebrew in the college of the Remonstrants at Amsterdam, and one of the most universal scholars of his time, published a new Latin version of the Pentateuch in 1710. The rest of his translation, which comprehends the greatest part of the Holy Scriptures, appeared at different periods and places; and a compleat edition of the whole was printed at Amsterdam in 1731. Though this version has little in it to claim a distinguished superiority over those that preceded, it does not deserve the contempt, with which it is treated by Houbigant, who seems to have inherited all Simon's prepossessions against the author, and omits no opportunity of depreting his labours. Had Le Clerc lived in our days, and been convinced of the necessity of correcting the text, before he attempted to translate it, he was certainly capable of producing a much better work; especially if he had learnt to write with a little more difficulty, and kept the *operosa carmina fingo* of Horace always in mind. But he wrote in too great a hurry, and on too many subjects, to write excellently on any subject; and, although extremely confident of his own abilities and bold in his assertions, yet was unaccountably, more or less, a slave to rabbinical prejudices.

To shake of these entirely, and to open a new and rational career to the Biblical critic, was reserved for Houbigant. That truly learned man, who died only in 1783, in the ninety eighth year of his age, had early applied to the study of the Oriental lan-

guages, in a society where they have long been cultivated with great success. Having learned the Hebrew according to Mascklef's new method, and compiled an excellent little dictionary, on the same principles, under the title of *Racines Hebraïques sans points-voyelles*, he formed the plan of a new version of the Old Testament; not from the present printed Masoretic copies, which Capellus and others had so invincibly proved to be erroneous; but from a copy corrected by such means, and from such sources of emendation, as he conceived the most likely to answer the purpose; and which are, in general, the same that have been specified in the former part of this Prospectus. With what ingenuity and judgment he has executed the great design, is well known to those who have perused his work. Nothing can exceed the purity, simplicity, perspicuity and energy of his translation; and if he has not always been equally happy in his conjectural emendation of the text, it cannot be denied that he has, at least, carried away the palm from all those who preceded him in the same career. The clamors that have been raised against him are the clamors of illiberal ignorance, or of partiality to a system which he had turned into ridicule. While his mode of interpreting is approved and imitated by a Lowth, a Kennicott, a Michaelis and a Starck, the barkings of inferior critics will not much injure him. Houbigant's version, accompanied with the Hebrew text of Vanderhooght, *prolegomena* and critical notes, was published in the most splendid manner at Paris, between

the years 1747 and 1753, in four folio volumes; and is already become a rare and costly book *.

Besides those general Latin versions, we have a great many others of some particular books or parts of books, by Zuinglius, Oecolampadius, Melancton, Drusius, Piscator, Musculus, Mafius, Terfer, Brentius, Bolducius, Justiniani, Felix Pratensis, Pellicanus, Genebrard, De-Muis, Ferrandus, Cocceius, Leusden, &c. of all which the industrious translator will avail himself, as far as he has it in his power; and from all which he may actually gather some grains of sterling ore.

What has been said of modern Latin, is equally applicable to modern vernacular translations. They are all cast, as it were, in the same mould; all scrupulously literal versions of the same faulty originals, and, almost always, under the guidance of Pagninus. The most distinguishing characters of those we are acquainted with shall be given in very few words.

The first vernacular version made in Europe from the originals, is the German of Luther. It was published, in parts, between the years 1522 and 1533; and, for the first time, all together in 1535. Since that time it has been often reprinted, with various corrections and interpolations, to adapt it to the different communions in Germany; and even translated, as an archetype, into other Teutonic

* The version was published separately in seven volumes large octavo; and there is a third edition of the Psalms in twelves, along with the Vulgate, of the year 1755.

dialects. It is certainly a wonderful production. If it be considered in what turbulent times, and amidst what variety of other avocations it was made, we are at a loss to comprehend how one man, who had no model to follow, (for Ulenberg's barbarous version from the Vulgate cannot be so called) could, in so short a space and with such scanty helps, accomplish so great a work. The Catholics and Calvinists have often decried it without reason; and more, perhaps, out of odium to its author than from a regard for truth. There are, indeed, some passages in the first editions, which he seems to have wrested a little, to make them speak more explicitly his favorite tenet of justification by faith alone. But these were few in number, and were rectified in posterior editions. That of the year 1542 was carefully revised by himself, with the assistance of some of the most learned men of that age; * and again just before his death in 1545.

Although the language of Luther's version had already in 1684 become so obsolete, that a glossary was found necessary for understanding it; and although it may be easily supposed, that a century more, in the present progress of the German tongue, has given it a still more antique mien; yet it retains, in a great measure, its first celebrity; and has not only triumphed over all former at-

* Melancton, Justus Jonas, Cruciger, Bugenhafius, Zeigler, Forstenius, Rorarius. By these it was collated not only with the Hebrew text, but also with the Chaldee paraphrases and the Greek and Latin versions: for we have already observed that the absurd idea of Masoretic infallibility had not yet been adopted by the reformers.

tempts to supersede it, but is, at this day, preferred by many Germans to their latest versions.

This, however, cannot, I think, be long the case: for if any man be equal to a good translation of the Bible, it is surely Michaelis. His erudition, taste and judgment are well known in the literary world by his numerous and various productions; and his version of the Old Testament, which is now happily concluded, must appear to those, who can relish all its beauties, one of the best that ever was made. He has, I know, been blamed for deviating too widely from the letter of his text. But his apology is obvious: he translated to be understood; and if he cannot be convicted of having mistaken or misrepresented the meaning of his author, he cannot surely be, with justice, censured for consulting the pleasure and profit of his reader. But it is impossible to please some critics, because they will not be pleased. Michaelis is not a blind admirer of the Masora, and cannot be brooked by those who are.

The Belgic and other northern churches had, for some time, no other version of the Scripture, but that of Luther; translated into their respective tongues, and altered, from time to time, by every new editor. But the States General of Holland, in consequence of a decree of the Synod of Dort, ordered a new Dutch translation to be made from the originals; which was published in the year 1636. A particular account of it may be read in Leusden *, who gives it much more than due praise.

* Philol. Hebr. mixt. dissert. xi

In like manner, a new Danish version, by Resenius Bishop of Seelandt, was published by the authority of Christian IV. in 1607. But the Swedes, I believe, have yet no other translation than that from Luther's, again and again corrected by different hands *.

The French translation, published at Neufchâtel in the year 1535, was the hasty production of Olivetan, assisted by Calvin; but it was, afterwards, so often revised and patched by different persons, that it scarcely retains any part of its first texture. After all, it is but an indifferent version, and very far from that perfection which might have been expected from the labours of such learned men as Bertram, Beza, Jaquemot, Goulart, Marez, Martin, &c. Some particular passages, however, I have found better rendered in it, than in any other Masoretic version.

Another French translation, by Diodati, was published at Geneva in 1644, and was well received by the Calvinists. It is not so literal as that of Olivetan, but much more elegant and perspicuous; which is the more to be wondered at, as the author was an Italian, and the same person who had, some years before, given a most elegant Italian translation; of which, in the sequel.

In fine, Le Cene's version, after a new plan of his own, appeared in 1707, but did not meet with the reception he expected. His *Projet*, which was translated into English by Hugh Ross, and

* I am informed by Mr. Woide that a new Swedish version of the Bible has been lately made; and that it is a very good one.

bafely published as an original work, contains many good obfervations, and fome excellent rules for tranflating well: but to thefe he feems not to have always paid due attention himfelf; and his tranflation may be faid, like Pope's woman, to have no uniform character at all. He is, fometimes, too fcrupuloufly literal; and, fometimes, too free a paraphraft. His ftile is incorrect, his diction impure, his expreffions often trite and ill-chofen, and as often affectedly *neoterical*. It muft, however, be allowed, that he has more frequently hit on the true meaning of his original, than any French tranflator that went before him; that he is never, or rarely, obfcure; and that he is very feldom biaffed by party prejudices.

Since Le Cene's verfion, feveral particular parts of the Bible have either been newly tranflated, or improved on the Geneva verfion, by Le Clerc, Saurin, Beaufobre, Chais and other French Calvinifts in Holland.

Bruccioli's Italian verfion from the originals, or rather from the Latin of Pagninus, was firft published at Venice in 1532; but the beft edition is that of Zanetti in 1540. This verfion was interpolated, and adapted to the Vulgate, by Marmochini; whofe edition, dedicated to the Bifhop of Rodez, appeared in 1538. It was alfo corrected and improved by Ruflicius, and published at Geneva in 1562. With all thefe pretended alterations, corrections and improvements, it is ftill but a poor tranflation, compared with that of Diodati, which was firft published at Geneva in 1607. There

is an elegance and ease in this translation that are extremely pleasant to the reader, joined with a conciseness, which one should think hardly compatible with ease and elegance. F. Simon greatly injures him, when he says, he is rather a paraphrast than a translator; but this is not the only rash assertion, which that Father has made.

Although the Spanish be, perhaps, of all the European tongues, that in which the Scriptures would appear in their greatest dignity; we have, as yet, no Spanish version of them that deserves much notice. Those made by the Jews are barbarous beyond conception*, and that of De Reyna, with all De Valera's improvements, is little more than a servile version from the Latin of Pagninus and Leo Juda.

But to what degree of perfection a Spanish version is capable of being carried, is evident from a translation of the book of Job, made, near two hundred years ago, by F. Luis de Leon.† I know

* The only complete Spanish version of the Hebrew Bible, made by Jews, is that published at Ferrara in 1553; of which the Pentateuch had before been printed at Constantinople, in rabbinical Hebrew characters. From these, the Pentateuch and Aptharoth of Manasseh-ben-Israel, differ but very little. They are useful only as glossaries.

† Luis de Leon was an Augustinian friar, and interpreter of the Scripture in the University of Salamanca. He published, in his own life time, or rather his friends published without his knowledge, an excellent Spanish translation of the Song of Solomon; for which he suffered five years imprisonment, in the dark and inaccessible dungeons of the Inquisition. But those miserable times are happily over; and his Job, which had been long known in manuscript, was printed at Madrid, with all necessary privileges in 1779; together with his learned commentary, and another poetical version, which in many places rivals the sublimity of the original. There is a tolerable Spanish translation of Pindar by the same author.

not if there be, in any language, a version that, to the strictest fidelity, joins so much elegance, precision and perspicuity.

I can say very little of the translations that have been made into other European dialects; because I am not in the least acquainted with the languages in which they are written. But I am informed by those who are, that they differ not much from our English version; which to some of them served as a model. They are all strictly Masoretical; except that which was made, some years ago, into Manks; in the forming of which, I have been told by one of the translators *, attention was paid to the various lections of manuscripts and other sources of emendation.

As Lewis has given a detailed, though confused, history of English Bibles, down to the year 1730; I shall only make a few remarks on the principal versions; and add a catalogue of such whole, or partial translations, as have since been attempted.

The first compleat edition of an English version of the whole Bible, from the originals, is that of Tyndal's and Coverdale's together †. It was printed abroad in 1537, and known by the name of Matthew's Bible. The violent opposition, it had met with at home, seems to have arisen more from the injurious reflections, contained in the prologues and notes, on the then established religion, than from any capital defects in the version itself. It was

* The reverend Mr. Kelly of Windsor.

† From Genesis to the end of Chronicles, and the book of Jonah, are by Tyndal; the rest of the Old Testament by Coverdale. The whole New Testament is Tyndal's.

far from being a perfect translation, it is true; but it was the first of the kind; and few first translations will, I think, be found preferable to it. It is, astonishing how little obsolete the language of it is, even at this day; and, in point of perspicuity and noble simplicity, propriety of idiom and purity of style, no English version has yet surpassed it. The criticisms of those who wrote against it (we are sorry to find Sir Thomas More among them) are generally too severe, often captious and sometimes evidently unjust. Of terms nearly synonymous, Tyndal may have possibly chosen those that were most favourable to his own religious notions; and, when his original admitted a double signification, preferred that which seemed the least favourable to the tenets he had renounced. This was, doubtless, a partiality which every translator ought carefully to avoid; but how few translators have always been sufficiently on their guard against its influence.

It was an idle affectation in Tyndal to translate *overseer*, *elder*, *congregation*, instead of *bishop*, *priest*, *church*; as the latter, already become familiar English words, are, in reality, of the same import with those he substituted in their place; and there is no more diversity between the terms, (to use an expression of Coverdale) than between *four-pence* and *a groat*. It was unfair, and perhaps insidious, in him, to put *image* for *idol*, *ordinance* for *tradition*, *secret* for *mystery* or *sacrament*: but these, and such like offensive terms, might have been easily corrected; nor was it, for that, either

necessary or expedient to commit the whole work to the flames; which served only to enhance its value, and gave it a greater currency. Burning suspicious books is the readiest way to multiply them; as persecuting for religion is the surest mean of propagating it.

Cranmer's *great* Bible, and all the other Bibles that were published during the reigns of Henry VIII. and Edward VI. are only so many improved copies of Tyndal's and Coverdale's translation. In some of them the additions that are found in the Greek or in the Latin Vulgate, though not in the present original, were judiciously inserted; either in a smaller character, or with some distinguishing mark. Tyndal's prologues and notes were also generally omitted; and some of the most exceptionable words altered. The editions revised by Taverner recede the farthest from their prototype, and are, therefore, the worst.

In Mary's days, the English refugees at Geneva set about making a new translation, the model of which seems to have been the French one of Olivetan, lately revised by Calvin and Beza. Hence, and because it was accompanied with marginal notes of the last mentioned author, it is known by the name of Beza's Bible. It became the favorite version of the puritan party, and went through a great many editions, during the reigns of Elizabeth and James; some of which are posterior even to the last revision of the Bible. But as the quarter it came from, and the persons who were con-

cerned in it, made it obnoxious to the Episcopalians, it was never received as a public standard. King James, in the famous conference at Hampton Court, pronounced it to be the worst of all English translations; yet his own translators borrowed more plentifully from it, than from any other; and, to say the truth, as a mere Masoretic version, it has considerable merit.

In ¹⁵⁶⁸1586 was published Parker's, or the Bishops Bible, which was appointed to be read in churches, as Cranmer's had been before. The greatest objection made to this translation was, that it deviated too much from the original, in favour of the Greek and Latin versions. This, we apprehend, would not, at present, be accounted a great defect; for the deviations from the original are rarely unwarranted; or, rather, they are only deviations from corrupted copies, or rabbinical comments. But, at that time, the idea had begun to prevail, that the Masoretic text was inviolably to be adhered to; and this was, probably, the chief cause, why the Bishops Bible was so little prized, and so soon superseded*.

For, on King James's accession to the throne of England, a new translation was immediately projected, and finished in the space of three or four years; although it was not published till 1611, when, *by his Majesty's special command*, it was appointed to be read in

* This translation having become extremely rare, a new edition of it was announced by Hogg in the year 1778: but this edition is a mere counterfeit; being an exact transcript of the Geneva Bible.

churches; and has continued, ever since, to be the public authorized version.

The means and the method employed to produce this translation; promised something extremely satisfactory; and great expectations were formed from the united abilities of so many learned men, selected for the purpose, and excited to emulation by the encouragement of a munificent Prince, who had declared himself the patron of the work. Accordingly, the highest eulogiums have been made on it, both by our own writers and by foreigners*; and, indeed, if accuracy, fidelity and the strictest attention to the letter of the text, be supposed to constitute the qualities of an excellent version, this of all versions must, in general, be accounted the most excellent. Every sentence, every word, every syllable, every letter and point seem to have been weighed with the nicest exactitude, and expressed, either in the text or margin, with the greatest precision. Pagninus himself is hardly more literal, and it was well remarked by Robertson, above a hundred years ago, that it may serve for a lexicon of the Hebrew language, as well as for a translation.

It is, however, confessedly not without its faults. Beside those, that are common to it with every version of that age, arising from

* F. Simon's *Critique* of this version is little to be regarded. He owns he had no other way of judging of it, but from some scraps translated into Latin or French. It was thus the younger Racine criticized Milton; and thus that Voltaire, from whom better might have been expected (as he had a tolerable knowledge of the English) criticized a writer he was not able to imitate.

faulty originals and Masoretic prepossessions, its own intrinsic and peculiar blemishes appear to be the following.

First, from a superstitious attention to render the Hebrew and Greek into literal English, its authors adopted modes of expression, which are abhorrent from the English idiom; and, perhaps, from that of all other modern tongues. Our ears, indeed, are now accustomed to this phraseology; and the language is become familiar to us, by being the language of the national religion: but a proof that many of those expressions are neither natural nor analogous, is, that they have never yet been able to force their way into common usage, even in conversation; and he, who should employ them, would be supposed to jeer at Scripture, or to affect the language of fanaticism. In short, what Selden said of it is strictly true. "It is rather translated into English words, than into English phrase." From the same cause, it is, in many places, obscure and ambiguous, where a small variation in the arrangement of the words, would have made it clear and unequivocal.

Secondly, there is a manifest want of uniformity in the mode of translating *. This was, indeed, unavoidable. The different parts of the Bible were assigned to so many different persons, or at least

* Dr. Myles Smith, who wrote the preface, seems to have been sensible of this, when he apologizes, in a certain manner, for a want of "Identity of phrasing." This difference is observable, not only in the different portions of Scripture assigned to the different classes; but often in the same portion, not seldom in the same book, and sometimes even in the same chapter, and same verse.

to so many different *Quorums*; and although the whole was ultimately committed to the revifal of fix perfons, affembled for the purpose, it does not appear, that they made any great change in its first texture. When we confider, that they were only nine months about this revifion, we cannot well look for a rigorous examination of the fidelity of the verfion; much lefs, for a reduction of its ftile to the fame colour and complexion *. The books called *Apocrypha* are, in general, I think, better tranflated than the reft of the Bible; for which one reafon may be, that the tranflators of them were not cramped by the fetters of the Mafora.

Thirdly, King James's tranflators miftook the true meaning of a great many words and fentences by depending too much on modern lexicons, and by paying too little attention to the ancient verfions. Many of thofe miftranflations have been noted and rectified by different commentators, but many ftill remain unnoticed, and feem to cry for amendment.

Fourthly, in compliance with a novel opinion, that not a word nor particle fhould be in a vernacular verfion, that has not another word and particle, exactly correfponding with it, in the Hebrew; and, at the fame time, to prevent an obfcurity, which would be the neceffary confequence of that mode of tranflating; perhaps, alfo, to obviate the reproaches of want of fidelity, that had been thrown

* It was again revifed by Bifhop Bilfon and Dr. Smith; but what they did, or how long they were employed in this revifal, I have not been able to learn.

out against the Bishops Bible, both by the Catholics and the Puritans; they encumbered their version with a load of useless Italics; often without the least necessity, and almost always to the detriment of the text. In fact, either the words in Italics are virtually implied in the Hebrew, or they are not. In the former case they are a real part of the text, and should be printed in the same character: in the latter, they are generally ill assorted and clumsy ekes, that may well be spared; and which often disfigure the narration under pretence of connecting it*.

Fifthly, King James's translators, like all the translators of their day, were too much guided by theological system; and seem, on some occasions, to have allowed their religious prejudices to have gotten the better of their judgment. To point out examples, would be an invidious task: but it is extremely proper that every translator should have them constantly in view, as so many cautionary mementos to himself.

In fine, through the constant fluctuation and progress of living languages, there are many words and phrases, in the vulgar version, now become obsolete; a specimen of which may be seen in Pilkington's judicious *Remarks*, published at Cambridge in 1759†. The

* Since writing the above, I am happy to find that the late Archbishop Secker was of the same opinion. In his valuable manuscript notes on the Bible, to which, through the liberality of his present worthy successor, I have had the most free and convenient access; he has dashed over many thousands of *Italics*, in the copy of the English Bible he used; and, hardly ever without some improvement to the passage.

† There is in the *Critical Review* (vol. xviii. page 101) a list of words and phrases, which

construction, too, is frequently less grammatical, than the present state of our language seems to require; and the arrangement of words and sentences is often such as produces obscurity or ambiguity.

Literal as James's translation is, it did not appear so to Gell, Canne and Ainsworth. The two first projected, and the last partly executed a new version, which was published in a folio volume in 1639*. It was formed, like Cajetan's Latin version, on this absurd principle, that the Scripture cannot be translated too literally; that every word and particle, nay the very arrangement of words and particles are full of mystery, and ought to be preserved with the greatest attention. We are astonished to find in a book written by a man of learning this strange position: "The Holy Spirit
" of God often intends a mystery, and so leaves the letter seem-
" ingly absurd: such seeming absurdities are left for the honour of
" God's Spirit, which clears the difficulties and sets all right †.

But what shall we say of those, who, at a much more enlightened period, have adopted the same servile plan? In the year 1773, was the authors deemed obsolete or improper; some of which, however, are still used by good writers. As for the long catalogue of words in Purver's appendix, there are at least two thirds of them not only not obsolete, but often more proper than those he would substitute in their place. Indeed, we ought not easily to reject a term, because it is not, perhaps, of the first fashion; especially if it be expressive, euphonic, and sufficiently removed from vulgarity. The nomenclature of our language is not yet so very copious, as to need to be diminished.

* It contains only the Pentateuch, the Psalms and the Song of Solomon. They had been separately published before.

† Dr. Gell's preface to an Essay toward the amendment of the last English translation of the Bible; printed at London in the year 1569.

published a new version of the Pentateuch, Joshua, Judges, and the four books of Kings. It was a posthumous work of Julius Bate, and is said, in the editor's preface, to have been the result of "more than thirty years indefatigable application to the study of the Hebrew scriptures." He was undoubtedly well versed in the Hebrew language, though he seems to have paid too little regard to the kindred dialects *: but his learning was deeply imbued with enthusiasm; and, on running from one ridiculous system, he eagerly embraced another. He despised the rabbinical but admired the Hutchinsonian *Cabbala*! It must, however, be confessed that he has translated many particular words and sentences with great propriety; and his divisions are frequently more natural than those of the Masoretes.

In the year 1764, Anthony Purver published his *New and literal translation of all the books of the Old and New Testament, with notes critical and explanatory*. This is said to have been the work of thirty years; and, indeed, it carries on the very face of it undeniable proofs of much reading and infinite labour. After all it is but a rude, incondite and unshapely pile; without order, symmetry or taste. It has not even that single indifferent quality which the Critical Reviewers too indulgently allow it to possess; that of exhibiting a faithful copy of the Masoretic text; which, I aver, is much more accurately represented by the common translation. I

* See preface to his Hebrew dictionary.

have passed this judgment on the honest, but not too modest Quaker the more freely, because he himself is a most desperate critic who spares no one, and dares his competitors to enter the lists with him. The best we can say of him, is what Ovid says of Phaeton. He attempted what was above his forces, and bravely failed in the attempt—*magnis tamen excidit ausis*. Bad as this version is, a translator must not think it beneath his notice: it may occasionally be useful to him. He will very often see by it, what he is to shun; and sometimes what he may imitate. In a field over-run with cockle, he may, now and then, find an ear of good wheat.

Beside those general translations, we have smaller portions of Holy writ, translated by different hands, since the beginning of this century, which it may not be here improper to mention.

A translation of the book of Genesis, by John Lookup, Esq. was published in the year 1740, and dedicated to the Archbishop of Canterbury. He seems to have studied, with attention, the genius of the original; and, in some places, has well expressed its meaning: but there is a strange singularity in his choice of terms, that often excites surprise, and sometimes risibility.

A new version of the three first chapters of Genesis with marginal illustrations and critical notes, was given by Abraham Dawson in 1763; and soon after a version of the fourth and fifth chapters. Why the Critical Reviewers should think this essay the work of a Deist, I cannot well conceive. The author is certainly a learned

man, and a judicious critic; and we wish he had proceeded in the same career.

Mr. Green of Cambridge published in 1762, his new translation of the Psalms, and in 1781 the poetical parts of the Old Testament: in both which works he has displayed much learning, judgment and taste. We have only to regret that he paid so much deference to the Harian system of Hebrew metre.

Still a model was wanting that should claim every suffrage, and merit universal applause. Need I inform my intelligent reader that such a model at length appeared in the year 1779; when Bishop Lowth favoured the public with his new translation of Isaiah? never did sacred criticism appear with greater dignity than in this invaluable work. Never were the gentleman, the scholar, the grammarian and the theologian more happily united.

So rare an example, set by such a character, could not fail to be copied. Mr. Benjamin Blayney, Rector of Polshott in Wilts, has lately published a translation of Jeremiah, on the same plan; and with great success. I trust he is now employed in some other similar work.

On the same plan Bishop Newcome is labouring on the Minor Prophets; and great expectations are justly formed, from his well known abilities and acumen*.

* Bishop Newcome's translation has appeared; a most learned and valuable work, of which I am happy to have it in my power to avail myself, and from which, I foresee, I shall derive

Mr. Hopkins, Vicar of Bolney, has given a corrected edition of the vulgar version of the book of Exodus; in which he has judiciously inserted the Samaritan and Septuagint supplements; when he had reason to think them genuine. His notes are short but generally apposite. May neither "age nor infirmity" prevent him from "prosecuting such useful studies *."

We have several English translations of the Song of Solomon; some in verse and some in prose; and most of them have considerable merit. We have, likewise, poetical versions of Job, the Psalms, and other detached parts of Scripture; which may be occasionally useful to a prose-translator: and there are a number of particular passages, throughout the whole Bible, well rendered and explained, in various critical Commentaries, Essays, Lectures and Sermons; of which a general collection would be of great utility.

Of the New Testament, beside the version, already mentioned, of 1729; we have, since that, three compleat new translations by

great advantages. I am only sorry that I should happen to differ from his Lordship about some of his RULES of translating; or rather about some of the more remote corollaries he deduces from them: while, at the same time his great judgment and taste, and his established character as a writer, make me hesitate and doubt about the propriety of some of my own. I shall consider both at more leisure and with new attention; and weigh his Lordship's reasons with all possible care and impartiality. In one rule, at least, we are perfectly agreed: "The critical sense of passages should be considered, and not the opinions of any denomination of Christians. The translators should be philologists, not controversialists."

* See his preface, p. xv.

Wynne, Worley and Harwood; two of St. Matthew by Scott and Wakefield; and we soon expect, from the pen of Dr. Campbell, a capital work on the four Gospels. But of all these I shall have occasion to speak, more at large, in proper time and place.

A society lately formed for *promoting the knowledge of the Scriptures* have already published some *numbers of Commentaries and Essays*; in which, among other things, they propose to give “an accurate translation of the passage to be explained, with proper divisions into paragraphs and sentences, and pointed with the utmost correctness.” We applaud the plan, and heartily wish them success: may we take the liberty to beg of them, to beware of system*.

From the above review of the principal versions made by Protestants, it will, I presume, appear, that their chief and peculiar imperfection is owing to the translators having followed too implicitly the Masoretic text, and paid too little regard to the ancient versions. Let us next see what are the special defects of the translations, that have been made by Catholics.

The number of these, indeed, is comparatively small; an idea having long prevailed, that the Scripture should not be translated into vulgar tongues. It is hard to reconcile this idea with any principle of reason, religion, or sound policy; and we must ascribe

* The numbers of this work, which are published occasionally, are sold by Johnson, in St. Paul's church-yard.

it, with some other absurdities, to the ignorance and prejudices of a barbarous age. The first positive decree on this subject was formed, I believe, in a diocesan synod at Thoulouse, in the year 1229; and is not the only exceptionable canon devised by that assembly. In the brighter days of Christianity it was not so. The works of Chrysostome, Basil, Ambrose, Jerom, Austin, are full of the most pressing exhortations to read the Scripture; and the reasons that have, in latter times, been urged against that practice by Mallet and other such writers * deserve not a serious answer. The prohibition was so far from answering the end proposed by it; that it had a quite contrary effect. The separatists from the church of Rome have used no weapon with more success against her, than this one, that was intentionally, but indiscreetly, forged for her particular defence.

It is remarkable, that this doctrine has chiefly obtained in those countries, where the *Inquisition* has been established. In France and Germany a different system has at all times, more or less, prevailed, in spite of the endeavours of some pragmatic zealots to introduce a less liberal discipline. Not to mention a number of manuscript versions, that were in use before the invention of typography; there are, at least, twelve printed editions of a French Bible prior to that of Olivetan, and several German ones before Luther's. Nor was the prohibitory doctrine always countenanced in Italy. We meet

* See a book entitled *Collectio auctorum vulgares versiones damnantium*. Paris 1661.

with thirteen editions of De Malermi's version, in the space of less than half a century; and all anterior to the aera of the Reformation. From the disposition of the present intelligent Pontiff, and from his express declaration, That the Scriptures "are sources to which all "ought to have free access, in order to draw from them, both a "sound doctrine and a pure morality," * we have reason to expect, that Italian Bibles will soon be as common on the other, as French Bibles are on this side of the Alps.

Another general prejudice among the Catholics was, that they must translate from the Latin Vulgate. This, indeed, was at one time necessary: for there were few or none capable of translating from the originals: but why the same practice was continued, after the revival of Greek and Hebrew learning, is harder to account for; though the following probable causes may be assigned.

One, perhaps, was, that they might not be thought to imitate the new reformers; who affected to cry up the originals, in proportion as they cried down the Vulgate. Opposition, we know, begets opposition. I have read a book written by a Neapolitan Jesuit, in which he gravely returns thanks to Heaven, that he was ignorant of Greek and Hebrew; for that the knowledge of these tongues, was a sure sign of heresy.

* *Optimè sentis, si Christi fideles ad lectionem divinarum literarum magnopere excitandos existimes. Illi enim sunt fontes uberrimi, qui cuique patere debent, ad hauriendam et morum et doctrinae sanctitatem.* From the Pope's letter to Abbate Martini in 1778.

But another more specious, though not more solid reason, for translating from the Latin, was derived from the Council of Trent's having declared it to be an authentic version. This, as I have already said, was by many construed into an absolute and exclusive authenticity; which gave the Vulgate a preference to the Originals themselves. It is plain, however, from the very tenor of the decree, that nothing could be farther from the meaning of the Council: and it has been always allowed by the most learned of the Catholic party, that the Vulgate received no other additional authority from the Synod's declaration, but that of being appointed the sole public Latin version. The Synod did not, could not, give it the smallest degree of intrinsic value which it had not before: for if it was not, before, an authentic version, there had been no authentic version in the Latin church for a thousand years.

The decree of the Council, then, did nothing more than what has been done in most Protestant countries: it established one particular Latin version, as a public standard; to be used in the church-office and in the schools of divinity: and surely of all Latin versions, then extant, the Vulgate, in every respect, deserved the preference. But never did it enter into the minds of that or any other council to ordain, that any version, however excellent, should supplant the originals; or that no other translation should be made from them.

The only plausible reason that can be offered for translating from the Latin, rather than from the originals is, that, the Vulgate

having been once adopted as the public Latin version, uniformity seemed to require that all vernacular versions should be consonant thereto. But if this motive had unluckily influenced St. Jerom, we should at this day have no Vulgate: for, from the same principle, he would have been obliged to translate from the Greek; which had been much more generally received, as a public standard, than ever the Latin was.

It is well known, that there are many passages in the Vulgate badly rendered. It is also allowed that other faults have crept into it, since the days of its author; many of which were not corrected, even by the last revisors: are we to translate these faults, and retain those renderings, for the sake of uniformity? When the Vulgate and the originals agree, which is generally the case, a translation, made from the latter, will necessarily be consonant with the former; and, at the same time, vouch for its fidelity. Where the originals are manifestly, or probably, corrupted, whilst the Vulgate manifestly, or probably, reads right; still a good translation will agree with the Vulgate: but is it in the least reasonable that, where the Vulgate is manifestly, or probably, erroneous, the translation should be erroneous too? He must be a sturdy *Vulgarist* indeed, who maintains so ridiculous a position.

The very idea of translating from a translation is a strange idea. We have an excellent French version of Plutarch, by Amyot: but would any Englishman sit down to translate Plutarch through the

medium of Amyot's version? Or could we bear a translation of *Q. Curtius*, even from the admired version of Vaugelas? In the very first transfusion, from one idiom to another, some part of the author must necessarily evaporate: how much more must he lose, on a second or third operation*?

But most Catholic translators have not only translated from the Vulgate, but made their versions more servilely literal than was necessary, even if they had translated immediately from the originals. This is the more astonishing, because the Vulgate is a free and liberal version; and, as far as Jerom is concerned, not altogether inelegant: whereas the translations that have been made from it, if we except one or two, are stiff and barbarous beyond conception. Hence they are often unintelligible†. It would be, moreover, easy to shew that the greatest part of those, who have translated from the Vulgate, have very often mistranslated it, from not understanding or not attending to the originals. The words of the Vulgate are Latin words, it is true; but they have sometimes so uncommon acceptations, and are so peculiarly phrased, that it requires a thorough acquaintance with the Oriental stile and knowledge of

* Some parts of the Vulgate are translations, from translations.

† "A close translation made at second hand from a free one must carry with it a strong tincture of the medium through which it has passed; at the same time that it has no chance of recovering any thing that may have been lost of the native and genuine colour of the first composition." See a sensible letter to the Critical Reviewers, vol. xxix. page 78.

the Oriental tongues, to comprehend their meaning; particularly in the poetical books.

It is evident, I think, from what has been said, that a translator, who works on the originals, can derive but little help from versions made from the Vulgate: and therefore I will not detain the reader with a long enumeration of them.

I have seen but four French translations made from the Latin: that of Louvain, that of Benoit, that of Corbin, and that of Saey. The first two are little more than the Geneva version accommodated to the Vulgate: the third is beneath criticism: the last is an elegant, secondary, version; and has, with very little variation, been a text-book to all the French commentators for a century past. It appears, however, to be too much a paraphrase; and seldom retains the simplicity and dignity, even of the Vulgate version*.

Until the year 1750, the German Catholics had no tolerable version of the Bible. That of Dietenberg is a bad transcript, or rather miserable interpolation, of Luther's; and Ulenberg's is disgustingly literal and obscure. But, at the forementioned period, a new translation was published by the Benedictines of Ettenheim-Munster, under the direction of F. Cartier, which is, I think, the best translation from the Vulgate, that has yet been made. The reason

* Saey's version was revised and republished by F. Carrieres, with short notes inserted in the text, in Italics; which give it a still more rambling, and often even a ludicrous air.

is obvious: the authors had recourse to the originals, in all dubious cases; and did not strictly adhere to the letter of their text*.

The Flemings have two tolerable versions, the one by De Witt, and the other by Vander-Schuren: but the French language has, for some time past, been so much cultivated by them, that Saçi's Bible is almost as frequently to be met with in the French Netherlands as in France itself.

There are two or three old Italian translations made from the Vulgate†; or adapted to it, from Pagninus's Latin version: but they have not been reprinted for many years back; and have, in reality, little to recommend them. I have not seen Martini's recent version, but I am informed it is very elegant.

In Spain there is not, I believe, at this day a single edited version of the whole Bible. That, which was printed in 1516, was so totally destroyed, that hardly a copy of it is to be found. Some particular books have been lately published; and it is not to be doubted but the rest will soon follow. The torch of learning is but newly lighted up in that ingenious nation: but, if we are not

* *Notandum quod illi viris eruditissimis non satis probentur qui versionem Vulgatae nostrae de verbo ad verbum adornandam esse autumant. Nam praeterquam quod inde sacri textus obscuritas minimè tollatur, alienum insuper sensum, spectato verborum tenore, saepius elici manifestum est.* Praefat. in Biblia Latino-Germanica. Constantiae, 1763.

† That of De Malermi, first published in the year 1471; that of Marmochini in 1538, and, perhaps, another whose author is not known. See Le Long.

greatly mistaken, it will soon break forth into a blaze of uncommon splendor*.

Our Saxon ancestors had vernacular versions of the Scripture as early as the reign of Alfred, who is, himself, said to have been one of the translators. Some parts of Aelfric's version of the Old Testament were published by Thwaites in 1698. And we have two different editions of a Saxon New Testament. All these were made from the Vulgate. Hampole, Wiclif and Perry translated also from the Latin; though, in some of their versions, they noted the differences of the Hebrew and Greek, from St. Jerom, Bede and De Lyra †.

From the days of Wiclif there was no version made from the Vulgate until the year 1582; when the English Catholics, who had, in the beginning of Queen Elizabeth's reign, taken refuge in Flanders, and were now removed to Reims on account of the war, published a translation of the New Testament only, in one quarto volume. The publication of the Old did not take place till after their return to Douay in 1609. Hence the whole version, which

* I am just now informed by a gentleman, lately arrived from Spain, that a new Spanish version of the whole Scriptures is actually preparing for the press; and that, in the mean time, De Valeras' translation is permitted to be read; the copies of which are sought with avidity and bought up at any price, at Paris, Amsterdam and other places they can be found in.

† It is a pity the various manuscripts of Wiclif's translation, as well as the more ancient Saxon ones, are not carefully collated and published. We should, by their means, see the state of the Vulgate at different periods, and be able to trace with more certainty the progress of our language.

is in three volumes, is known by the name of the Douay Bible. It is a literal and barbarous translation from the Vulgate, before its last revision; and accompanied with acrimonious and injurious annotations. Their residence in a foreign country, and what they deemed a cruel exile from their own, had corrupted the translator's language, and soured their tempers; and it was, unhappily, the common custom of those lamentable times, to season every religious controversy with gall and vinegar. We do not find that Withers, Fulke and Cartwright, who drew their quills against the Douay annotators, were a bit more courteous in their retorts.

The late most pious Dr. Chaloner revised the Douay version, on the Clementine edition of the Vulgate; greatly curtailed the annotations; and corrected the style, chiefly from King James's translation. There are two editions of this revision; one in the year 1750, and the other in 1764; both in five volumes, small octavo. I am told another edition is preparing by the gentlemen of the English college at Douay; and proposals for republishing it at Dublin, in one quarto volume, are now handed about in London.

Mr. Caryl, a gentleman who had followed the fortune of King James II. published, at St. German's, a new version of the Psalms in 1700; in which, taking Bellarmine for his guide, he has often expressed the meaning of the Vulgate, much better than the Douay translators.

In 1719 Dr. Cornelius Nary published his New Testament at

Dublin, in one volume octavo; and Dr. Witham's appeared in 1730, in two volumes octavo. There are many good renderings in both these versions.

Mr. W. Webster, curate of St. Dunstan's in the west, translated the New Testament from the Vulgate, through the medium of F. Simon's French version, and published it at London, in two volumes in quarto, in 1730.

I have in my possession a manuscript New Testament prepared for the press, by the late Mr. Robert Gordon of the Scotch college at Paris; in which some considerable mistranslations of all the preceding versions are noted and rectified *.

But although the Catholics, in general, have made their vernacular versions of the Bible from the Vulgate; they have not done so, without exception. Two of the forementioned Italian translations, are professedly made from the originals. In France, besides Cordurc's version of Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiasticus and the Song of Solomon, we find a translation of the Psalms by Rodolphe le Maitre; another by Isaac le Maitre, and another by Dupin; all made from the Hebrew in the last century; not to mention two compleat manuscript versions of the whole Bible; one by Dom. Loubineau, a Benedictine monk; and the other by F. Feraud of the Oratory *.

* I owe this version to Mr. Marmaduke, an ingenious but not very fortunate bookseller in London; who has also favoured me with his own curious manuscript remarks on the Douay Bible, and on Dr. Chaloner's revision of it.

† See Le Long: *append. ad Biblioth. sacram.*

In the year 1737 a new version of the Psalms was published by Dom. Maur d'Antine; and in 1739 appeared Le Gros's first edition of *The Holy Bible translated from the original texts, with the various readings of the Vulgate, &c.* printed on a very small type, and in one thick octavo volume. It was republished, with the author's last corrections, at Cologne, in 1753, in six volumes in twelves. In this translation the additions of the Vulgate are inserted in the same characters with the text; but within crotchets. What is added from other ancient versions is also within crotchets, but in Italics; and the supplements, deemed necessary to correct or illustrate the text, are in Italics, without crotchets.

About the middle of this century, a school of Capuchins was formed at Paris, under the direction of Abbé de Villefroi, for the laudable purpose of elucidating the original Scriptures. The Popes Benedict XIV. and Clement XIII. were so well pleased with the design, that they both testified their approbation by special briefs; and the latter honoured the little society with the title of *Clementine*. Besides an elegant translation of the Psalms and some other books of the Old Testament, they have already published a great many volumes of *Principes discutés*, in which there is much ingenuity and considerable erudition: but a strong tincture of rabbinism imbibed from their master, and a violent attachment to a specious but delusive and dangerous system of interpretation, have often led them aside from the right road, and exposed them to

the too severe though just animadversions of more rational critics *.

We have also a curious and fanciful French version of the Psalms from the Hebrew by Laugeois; in which, although he has certainly taken by far too great liberties with his original, and given novel and arbitrary significations to a number of Hebrew words, there are, nevertheless, many elegant and some uncommonly happy renderings.

The amiable and pious author of *Spēctacle de la nature* left behind him a French version of the Psalms and some other small portions of Scripture, which, though professedly made from the Vulgate, has a constant allusion to the Hebrew, and contains some valuable elucidations, especially in the notes.

The last published French version of the Psalms is that of my old condisciple the Abbé Constant, which appeared in 1783, in four volumes in 12mo, and has, I am told, considerable merit.

But a still more important work has been recently announced: a French translation of the whole Bible by the late F. Houbigant; the publication of which is committed to his learned colleague F. Lalande; and will not, we hope, be long delayed.

Having thus seen what helps a translator may derive from former versions, whether in his own or other languages; let us next see what assistance he is likely to receive from interpreters and com-

* See *Jugement sur quelques traductions des Pseaumes*, par L'Advocat. *Examen du Pseauteur François des Peres Capucins*, par Houbigant.

mentators. Indeed if the light thrown upon the Sacred Writings, were in proportion to the number of those, who have attempted to illustrate them, there would not, at this day, remain the least shade of obscurity: all would be obvious, plain and easy. But of above a myriad of names that appear in the long list of interpreters, nine thousand and nine hundred may, without much detriment, be struck off: and, even of the remaining hundred, there are hardly fifty who are not mere compilers, or servile copyists of one another.

One, who has not read the Fathers, might be apt to imagine that great resources were to be found in their writings. But whoever looks for that, will be miserably disappointed. The Christian writers of the first two centuries were men of great probity; but, generally, of little learning and less taste. They transmitted to posterity the *Depositum*, which they had received from the Apostles and their immediate successors, with great honesty, earnestness and simplicity; and recommended the doctrines they taught more by the sanctity of their lives than by the depth of their erudition. They form so many invaluable links, in the golden chain of universal and Apostolical tradition; but they afford very little help towards clearing up the dark passages of Scripture.

The following ages produced a considerable number of truly learned, and of some very eloquent men; but few of them had the qualifications necessary to form a good Bible-interpreter. There are

many excellent homilies on almost every part of Holy Writ, and the just application of an infinite number of particular texts to the most salutary purposes of *instructing*, *exhorting* and *reproving*, in the volumes of Clement, Cyprian, Cyril, Athanasius, Basil, Ambrose, Augustine, Leo and the Gregories of Nazianzum, Nissa and Rome; and, in these the preacher will always be sure to meet with the best models of true Christian eloquence, joined with the soundest morality. But, if we except Ephrem the Syrian, Origen, Eusebius, Theodoret, Chrysostome, Procopius and Olympiodorus among the Greeks; and Jerom alone among the Latins; I will venture to say, that we shall not easily find, in all the rest, a thousand lines that one would chuse to copy over, in a modern work of Scripture criticism. They generally contented themselves with quoting such copies of the Greek or Latin translations as they had at hand; or, perhaps, often with quoting such parts of them as they could recollect from memory; without ever comparing, or being indeed able to compare them with the originals: and when they could not find a plausible literal explanation of the text thus quoted, they had recourse to figure and allegory*.

* This disposition to allegorize, which has more or less prevailed in every age, ought also to be numbered amongst the causes of imperfect translations: in as much as it evidently determined translators to adopt, of two or more probable renderings, that which most favoured their own propensity. The example and authority of Origen served greatly to propagate this pernicious custom; from the contagion of which few of the succeeding Fathers escaped. The works of Ambrose, Augustine and the Roman Gregory are full of such puerile interpretations:

In the succeeding degenerate and dark period, the study of the Scripture was much neglected; and more commentaries were made on the Decretals and the Master of Sentences, than on Moses and the Prophets: yet the first part of this period, which we may call the brazen age of Christianity, produced a Bede, an Alcuin and a Rabanus; in whose commentaries, if we find little original, we have, at least, a tolerable selection from prior commentators. But from the end of the ninth, to the beginning of the fifteenth century, Oecomonius, Theophylactus and De Lyra are almost the only writers on this subject, whose works deserve a perusal.

On the revival of letters, a whole legion of glossarists, commentators, and paraphrasts arose; but not many of them added to the former stock of Scriptural knowledge. The contest was, who should write the largest volumes, crowd their pages with the greatest number of quotations, and say the most ill-natured things of those who happened to be of a different opinion. Not only did the Catholic and the Protestant write commentaries for the purpose of confuting one another; but the Scripture became a common arsenal, whence the Dominican drew arms against the Jesuit, the Je-

but it is astonishing to find the acute and rational Jerom sometimes carried away in the common vortex. Although both the context and the example of the Septuagint should have led him to translate Gen. xxvi. 17. "in the *valley* of Gerar", yet he prefers "in the *torrent* of Gerar;" for this fine reason; that Isaac, after having been raised to such a pitch of greatness, could not possibly have dwelt in a valley. *Neque enim Isaac, postquam magnificatus est, in valle habitare potuit.*

suit against the Dominican, and the Augustinian against both: while, on the other hand, it supplied various weapons to the Lutheran, the Calvinist, the Socinian, the Anabaptist, and every other denomination of pretended Reformers*.

But though scarcely two interpreters agreed in their explanations, one thing was common to them all. Instead of endeavouring to free the text from the adventitious rubbish, that time and blundering transcribers had heaped upon it; they applied their whole art and industry, to convert that rubbish into genuine ore; or, at least, into such mixt metal, as was current in their own communion. If a few candid and impartial men, such as Erasmus, Drusius, Piscator, Vatablus, Mercerus, Cajetan, Grotius, Cappelus, &c. had the courage to deviate from the common track, they

* To this we owe yet another cause of the imperfection of modern translations. Not satisfied with establishing their respective tenets, from the supposed meaning of the words; they sometimes ventured to fit the words themselves to the meaning they wished them to have; and waving, as Gill observes, whatever seemed to make against them, they chose such terms as suited best with their own interest, opinions, and prejudices. Many, and I fear too just, mutual reproaches have been made on this head. I make little account of the invectives of such violent and cavilling writers as Frizon, Veron, Martyn, and Ward; or of the angry retaliations of Amana, Cartwright, Withers, James, and Fulke. They often, on both sides, caught at mere shadows, and found designed mistranslations, where there was no mistranslation at all. But still I believe there was more or less ground for reciprocal impeachment; and I have hardly seen a modern version, in which I could not discern some visible marks of party-zeal. The age of polemical scurrility is, or ought to be, now over; and writers of every persuasion will henceforth, we trust, reciprocally assist one another, towards discovering the genuine signification of such texts or terms as admit of ambiguity; without insidiousness or rancour.

were pointed out by all parties as suspicious and dangerous writers; loaded with injuries and maledictions; and sometimes obliged, according to the testimony of Mariana, to plead their cause in chains. Yet it is chiefly in their works that we are to look for almost all that is truly valuable in the commentaries of the last and preceding centuries.

The young eager Biblical student, who sets out with a resolution of reading whatever has been written on the subject, is frightened, on opening his Le Long, at the formidable host of authors he has to encounter; and, if he be not very steady in his purposes, will be apt to recoil, and decline the enterprise: but let him not despair; I will venture to assure him that the quintessence of all he seeks for is to be found, judiciously collected, and methodically arranged, in Poole's *Synopsis*. Had I always been convinced of this truth, I should have spared myself much fruitless labour, and saved a great deal of lost time: but experience, although a sure, is a slow teacher, *et longo post tempore venit*. Let us husband the moments that yet remain, and endeavour to employ them more usefully.

For, within these last hundred years, things have taken a different turn; and since Capellus pointed out the right way, a number of critics have trodden it with success. By their continued and concurring efforts, the avenues to the sanctuary have been gradually cleared; Masoretic prejudices have been removed; religious animos-

sity has in a great measure subsided; and the learned, of all persuasions, can now bear to walk in the same path, without jostling one another.

This, like most other branches of critical learning, begun to flourish first in France: thence it found its way into Britain; and is, now, making a rapid progress over all Europe, especially among the northern nations.

To enumerate all the useful books and tracts, that have been written on this subject, during the forementioned period, would lead me beyond the bounds I have prescribed to myself: but as some of my readers may, possibly, wish to know, by whom this important revolution, in sacred literature, has been principally effected; I will just mention such of them, as appear to me to have "laboured more abundantly" than the rest; without meaning to throw any sort of reflection on those I may omit.

The works of Capellus, the founder of this *New Academy*, will always claim a particular attention. There are, in all his writings, a clearness, a method, and a force that should provoke the emulation of every Biblical critic: though few, I fear, will be able to attain them in the same degree. A new edition of his *Critica Sacra* was published by Vogel at Leipzig in 1777.—Although Bochart be a tedious writer, and although many of his conjectures be extremely dubious, he will seldom be consulted without advantage.—The *Exercitationes* and some other works of Morinus contain a great

number of judicious observations, blended with some paradoxes.—F. Simon's Critical History is, notwithstanding its few oddities, a most capital work; and the first, we believe, in which are laid down just and rational principles, for having a good vernacular translation of the Bible.—Much just criticism is found dispersed in the works of Huet, Renaudot, Natalis Alexander, Lamy, Thomassin; the Dissertations of Dupin; the Dissertations, Prefaces, Commentary, and Biblical Dictionary of Calmet; the additional Dissertations and notes of his abridgers; Father Tournemines *Prolegomena* to his edition of Menochius; Menochius's own Annotations, and the short but excellent Notes of Emanuel Sa; Pezron's *Antiquité des tems*, with its defence against Martianay; Martianay's own pieces on the same subject, and his Preface and Notes to his edition of St. Jerom; Le Quien's and Souciet's answers to Pezron; Montfaucon's Preface and Notes to Origen's Hexapla, with many scattered remarks in his other works; Houbigant's excellent *Prolegomena*, Prefaces, and Notes to his Latin version of the Bible; the work of the Capuchines already mentioned; the Theses and little posthumous pieces of L'Advocat*; Constant's Commentary on

* First Hebrew professor in the chair of Sorbonne, erected in the year 1751 by the Duke of Orleans, for the purpose of reviving Oriental learning in the University of Paris, and of explaining the Hebrew scriptures. No man was more capable of fulfilling this double object than L'Advocat. He had a penetrating genius, an astonishing memory, a correct judgment, and an exquisite taste. He was the most universal scholar, the most pleasant teacher, the most benevolent man and the most moderate theologian I ever knew. Had he lived a little longer

the Psalms, lately published; besides a number of memoirs, dissertations, and occasional remarks, in the several journals of Paris, Trevoux, Verdun, Amsterdam, the Hague, and Geneva—all which are deserving of the translator's notice, and will all afford both information and entertainment. Nor are the works of the French Refugees in Holland to be neglected; particularly those of Le Clerc, Le Cene, Spanheim, Basnage, Beaufobre, Martin, Chais, Roques, Saurin; most of whom were extremely capable of carrying sacred criticism to a great degree of perfection; had they been less wedded to old prepossessions, and less addicted to theological system.

Among the sacred critics of Italy, the most distinguished are Bartolucci, Cardinal Thomasi, Bianchini, Diodati*, Ugolini, Fabricy, De Magistris, De Rossi, Georgi, Poch, Setaro, Borgia, Anfaldi; many of whom are yet alive; and, I doubt not, heartily labouring in the same vineyard.

In Germany a constellation of writers have lately arisen; who have dispelled more clouds, and cleared up more obscure passages of Scripture, than perhaps the writers of any other nation; our

and enjoyed more leisure to accomplish the work he meditated on the Scripture, we should now possess a treasure of great value; but a weakly constitution and too constant an application to his professional duties hurried him away in his 56th year, to the great regret of all who knew him, but of none more than of him who dedicates these lines to his memory.

* Not the same with the translator of the Bible.

own not excepted: although they are not yet arrived at the zenith they fairly promise to attain. At the head of these we place the venerable Michaelis, one of the most learned and judicious modern critics: nor will Biorn-Sthal, Bruns, Fischer, Hafencamp, Gottfried, Lilienthal, Schulze, Oberlin, Storke, Outhovius, Schoetgenius, Starck, Koppe, Schnurrer, Eichorn, Cramer, Teller, Scheidius, Biel, Knappe, Doederlein, Dathe, Rare, Griefbach, Velthufen, Woide, Maldenhover, Adler, Birch, and other respectable names, grudge the veteran this honour of precedence; when it is allowed, that every one of themselves will be a precedent and a model in his turn. There are also many pieces in the literary diaries of Leiden, Leipzig, Goettingen, Saxa-Gotha, and Berlin, which the curious and inquisitive indagator will be glad to have discovered and perused*.

It may seem an unnecessary affectation to give a catalogue of English writers; who, since the beginning of this century, have so largely contributed to emancipate sacred criticism, from the fetters forged by credulity and superstition; as the greatest part of my readers may be supposed to be, at least, as well acquainted with them as myself: but, besides, that I cannot, without ingratitude, suppress the obligations I lie under to those of my country-

* The Biblical student will also be glad to know that Mr. Maty's new Review contains the earliest intelligence of foreign publications of every kind; and particularly those that relate to sacred criticism.

men who have walked before me in the same career, and smoothed so many places of the rugged path; I observe, with concern, that there are others, who endeavour to throw obstacles in the way; and deter many from entering into it, who might be capable of making uncommon progress.

It is not easy to root out old prejudices even from the minds of the learned. The belief of an immaculate original is not yet universally exploded; and there are who think religion is in danger, if but a single letter or point be altered or expunged. As long as this idea obtains, little more will be done among us towards clearing up the Hebrew writings, than has been done already. Poole, Prideaux, Patrick, Pearce, Hammond, Henry, Whitby, Wells, Wall, Waterland, Clarendon, Clarke, Locke, Sale, Sykes, Stackhouse, Dodd, Watson, and some others of less note have corrected many mistranslations of our present version; and we are greatly indebted to them for their learned labours; but some of them would have laboured much more successfully, if they had raised their superstructures on a better foundation than the supposed integrity of the Masoretic text.

We are not, then, to conclude from the great number of expositors, that therefore the Scriptures are thoroughly expounded. The generality of our commentators, like those of other nations, are either blind followers of some particular theological system; or drudging compilers from different systems. The huge masses

of indigested matter, that issue yearly from the presses of Fleet-Street and Pater-Noster-Row, are generally better calculated to throw ridicule on the sacred text, than to explain it; and oftener furnish the infidel with specious pretexts, for questioning the truths of religion, than the believer with solid arguments to support them. Expunge from those motly performances the unmeaning mystic jargon, the nauseous cant of enthusiasm, and the trite and tedious maxims of a common-place morality; all that is left behind of any value may be compressed into a nut-shell. Yet these are the guides that direct the people in their Biblical researches. By these the minds of the vulgar are early tinctured with that fanatic zeal, that religious rancour, that horrid intolerantism; the fatal effects of which we so lately experienced; but which could not have happened in a free and liberal nation, like ours, without such potent incitements, as arise from religious prejudices.

To prevent such dangerous consequences, and to rescue the Scriptures from the hands of such empyrics, ought to be the aim and endeavour of every rational theologist. The salutary waters of life should be presented to the people as free of every foreign admixture as possible; and nothing should be presented along with them, that has the least tendency to foment bigotry or create party-rage. Let profound mystics and subtle casuists be, if they will, employed in discovering *allegorical*, *anagogical*, and *moral* meanings; let professed polemics torment the text, to make it a-

gree with their favourite hypothesis; it is the business of the mere interpreter, much more of the translator, to give the obvious literal sense of his author; with a view to no particular system, and without regard to parties or principles.

Luckily this mode of interpreting has been already adopted by our best writers; and we have only to follow and improve their plan. Whoever has read, with attention, Whiston's Essays on the true text of the Old Testament, Hallett's notes on several texts of Scripture, Mudge and Merrick on the Psalms, Costard's Observations and Dissertations, Pilkington's Remarks, Heath and Peters on Job, Hunt on Proverbs, Desvoeux on Ecclesiastes, Arnold on the Apocrypha; above all Dr. Kennicott's Dissertations on the state of the Hebrew text, and Bishop Lowth's admirable Preface to his translation of Isaiah*, must, we think, be convinced that sacred criticism can never be brought to the perfection of which it is susceptible, but by the method they have pointed out and practised: and his conviction will be still more compleat, if he read the several pieces that have been written on the other side of the question†.

* Add to these the Prefaces and Annotations of Blayney and Bishop Newcome, some papers in the Theological Repository, several of Bishop Watson's Theological Tracts, and many excellent occasional remarks in the Monthly and Critical Reviews, and Gentleman's Magazine.

† See Rutherford's, and the French Abbé's Letters to Kennicott, Robertson's Analysis of the Pentateuch, Baruh's Critica Sacra examined—Durel on the Hebrew text, Horne's View, Purver's Annotations. See also different works of Schmid, Eichorn, Tychsen, Razenberger, &c. &c.

Having thus pretty copiously treated on the principal causes of the imperfection of modern versions, and pointed out what I deemed the surest means of removing them, I will now venture to give my opinion of the distinguishing characters of a good translation; and of the chief qualifications necessary for a translator.

First of all then, a translation of the Bible ought to be faithful; that is, ought to express all the meaning and no more than the meaning of the original. But though this is universally allowed to be the first quality of a good version, it is not easy to determine how it is to be attained: and one of the greatest difficulties I have met with, was to fix upon that precise mode of rendering which should be the best calculated to give a genuine copy of the Scriptures, in intelligible English; without prejudice to the simplicity and dignity of the originals. Two opposite extremes were, I knew, to be equally avoided, a wild paraphrase and a servile version; but in what particular point between them I should rest, or how the happy medium was to be always preserved, were problems, of which, the more I revolved them in my mind, the more hard I experienced it to find a satisfactory solution.

I consulted my learned friends; but they differed so widely in their sentiments, that I was more perplexed than before; and, after all, obliged to rely on my own judgment, such as it is; and to prescribe for myself one uniform route, that seemed the most likely to lead me on, with the least danger, to the intended goal. I en-

tered into it with the greater confidence, because it had been trodden before by Symmachus and Jerom; and recommended by the best critics of every age, as the surest way to succeed.

My translation, then, is neither literal nor verbal; but, if I may use the term, strictly *sentential*; that is, every sentence of the English corresponds as exactly to the Hebrew, as the difference of the two idioms will permit; and although I have not made myself so much a slave to the original, as to adopt its peculiar phraseology and construction, where they greatly differed from our own, I have always kept as closely to it as was compatible with the ideas I had formed to myself of a good translation*.

I am not ignorant of the arguments that are urged in favour of a servilely literal version. I have long and seriously pondered them, and found them to be light as air. The chief, and indeed the only specious one, is that in a free translation, there is no small danger of substituting the translator's ideas, in the room of the author's; and consequently of misleading the reader: but it would be easy to prove that this danger is greater in literal versions; and that Pagninus and Montanus are less faithful guides than even Castalio, Michaelis or Wynne. It is indeed absolutely impossible to translate literally from any language whatever, without being often barba-

* *Translatio vera est cujus sensus a suo fonte non deviat, sed sententias reddit et easdem et aequales.* Greg. de Valentia apud Walton.

rous, obscure and equivocal; and this alone is a sufficient reason for translating freely*.

For perspicuity is the second most essential quality of a good translation; nor need we the authority of Horace or Aristotle to establish a proposition so agreeable to common sense. The Jewish, like all other writers, certainly wrote to be understood. The poets and prophets themselves are not obscure on account of their style; which, though bold and figurative, must have been perfectly intelligible when they wrote; but from our imperfect knowledge of the Hebrew idiom and of the customs and manners of those times. A translator, therefore, who, under the pretext that his originals are

* From this the reader must by no means infer that my translation is not a close one. Between *loose* and *liberal* the distance is great; and even of liberal translations there are many various kinds; some of which are little different from what is often, though improperly, called a *literal* version. What I mean is, that perspicuity and the other qualities of a good translation ought never to be sacrificed to a scrupulous adherence to the letter of the original: and, indeed, an English translator will not often have occasion to make such sacrifices. Our language easily moulds itself into the Hebrew form; and it rarely happens that we are under any necessity of having recourse to paraphrase or circumlocution, to express the full meaning of the text. Even when the syntactical arrangement is different, there is a striking equipollence of simplicity, conciseness and energy to be attained; which, perhaps no other modern language can boast of; and which is not found in ours, with regard to any other language, but the Hebrew. With this natural advantage, I flatter myself I shall be able to give a version in nearly as few words as are in the original; and, at any rate, less verbose than even our present vulgar translation. The very few liberties I have taken with the text, to render my version more intelligible, and I flatter myself more energetic; and the small deviations I have made from the track of my antecessors, for the sake of a more easy and unembarrassed march, shall be noted and exemplified, in my General preface.

obscure, affects to give an obscure translation, betrays either his idleness or his ignorance; offers an insult to his reader; and throws an oblique ridicule on the author he pretends to interpret. If the Scriptures are at all to be translated, of which we can have no doubt, they should certainly be made as plain and perspicuous as possible; and not a single ambiguity should be left in them that can be by any means removed. That there are certain mysterious words of the originals, which should not be rendered, may be a pious, but is not a rational notion. The Greek and Hebrew are not, of their own nature, more sacred languages than the Welch or Wallachian: and surely, to a mere English reader, *pass-over* and *praise ye the Lord*, are not less significant and far more edifying sounds than *pasch*, and *hallelujah*.

A third quality of a good version is elegance; but an elegance of a special kind, and of peculiar characteristics. That an elegant translation of the Bible has a great advantage over a barbarous one, is strongly verified by that of Luther; which would never have been so well received at first, nor continued so long the favourite of the German nation; if it had not, in an eminent degree, possessed the charms of an enchanting style, and all the graces of a correct and elegant diction. The idle sneer of F. Simon, "that Luther seemed to have only in view to make the Holy Ghost speak good German," is in reality a great panegyric; and the aim of Luther ought to be that of every other translator. It is an odd manner of

conciliating the taste and fixing the attention of the reader, to tell him, you despise elegance of composition.

But how is this elegance to be acquired? Perhaps, it is not entirely to be acquired. It must be, in part, the gift of nature; but the talent may certainly be cultivated and improved; and the observation of the following rules, I apprehend, will be found contributive to that purpose.

In the first place, a translator of taste will be careful to make a just and proper selection of terms. Secondly, he will arrange them in the most natural order. Thirdly, he will reject all meretricious ornaments. Let us illustrate these rules by a few examples.

A proper choice of terms is the first and perhaps the hardest duty of a translator. It is even harder for him, than for an original composer. The latter may accommodate the sentence to his words; but the former is under an absolute necessity of adapting words to sentences. Now as there is, in no language, a perfect *synonymity* of any two terms, it becomes a matter of great difficulty to make always a just distinction. The same Hebrew word, Genesis i. 16. has been rendered *lights*, *luminaries*, and *illuminations*. The first was the term adopted by our last translators; the second is used by Wells, Stackhouse, and Dodd; and the third by Lookup: but whoever examines the analogical propriety of the three terms, and compares them with the original, will clearly perceive, that *luminaries* is here a more suitable term than *lights*, and *lights* than

illuminations—To *divide*, to *separate*, and to *distinguish* are words of nearly the same signification; yet I should say, “to *divide* a victim, a portion, an inheritance, the land, the spoil; to *separate* light from darkness, waters from waters, the sons of Levi from the other tribes; to *distinguish* the clean from the unclean, the holy from the profane, the children of Israel from the Egyptians.”

It may, however, happen that a word shall properly enough express the meaning of the original, and yet be inelegant and inadmissible; either, because it is altogether obsolete, or is of low and trite usage, or has some ludicrous idea annexed to it, or, in fine, favours of affectation and pedantry. In all these cases a judicious translator will substitute some more modern, more noble, more decent, and more unaffected term; though, perhaps, it should not be quite so significant and emphatical. *Albeit*, *fet*, *hosen*, *leasing*, *sith*, *seeth*, *sod* were in the days of our forefathers as expressive and congruous words, as those we now use instead of them; yet no translator, who studies elegance, will admit them into his version; much less will he admit such indelicate vulgarisms, as we find in almost every page of Purver's translation; or such quaintness of expression, as is too often chargeable on Le Cene *.

All this, I think, will be readily granted by those who are in the least acquainted with the laws of good writing. But, in the

* Both these vices are wonderfully united in a ridiculous and profane version of the New Testament, published with the Greek, in two volumes octavo, in the year 1729.

course of my labours, a doubt has occurred, relative to this subject; which I wish to propose to the consideration of the learned. It has been, I believe, a generally received idea that a translator should prefer words that are originally of the language into which he translates, to words that have been adopted from other languages; and, I confess, I was once strongly prepossessed with this idea. For why, said I, should we have recourse to Greek and Latin, when we can find equivalent terms of good Saxon etymology? I am now convinced I was in the wrong; and that words of a foreign extraction are, not seldom, preferable to those of our own growth. I will give my reasons, and support them by examples.

It will not, I think, be denied, that, of words equally significant, those are the most eligible, which are the least productive of ambiguity, the least liable to receive new and accessory meanings, and the least likely to deviate into triteness and vulgarity *. But to me it appears evident, that words, which we have adopted from other languages, have generally all those qualities in a greater degree than the original terms of our own. They are therefore generally to be preferred. For this reason I should rather say to "*est-bless*" than "to *set up* a covenant;" "to *regulate*" rather than "to *rule*" "the day and the night;" *abyss* rather than *deep*; *dismiss* rather than *send away*; *paradise* rather than *garden*; *deluge* rather than *flood*; *conflux* or *assemblage* of waters rather than *gathering together* of waters; *genealogy* rather than *book of the generations*, &c.

* See Michaelis's Dissertation on the influence of opinions on language. Sect. 2.

This rule, however, admits of very many exceptions ; and great discretion, is required in the use of it. A word of foreign derivation, though fully naturalized, is often less proper than another aboriginal one of the same signification. Thus, there is no doubt but that the common version of Genesis xi. 8. "The Lord *scattered* them;" is preferable to Lookup's: "The Lord *dissipated* them;" although perhaps, *dispersed* would here be better than either. In like manner, I should prefer *an issue of blood* or a *blood issue* to a *sanguinary flux*; *after these things* to *after these transactions*; *nakedness* to *nudity*; *power* to *ability*; *foolishness* to *infatuation*, &c.

It may sometimes even happen, that a word of our own growth and an exotic one of the same force, are of such a nature as to be, respectively, more proper in one circumstance, and less so in another. Thus, of the terms *drunk* and *inebriated*, I should use the first, Job xii. 25. "he maketh them to stagger, like a *drunk* man:" but the latter Gen. ix. 21. "and he drunk of the wine until he was *inebriated*;" for reasons which, I think, will be obvious to every intelligent reader. I would not in the last instance translate *intoxicated* with Lookup; because intoxication does not properly denote drunkenness, in as far as it proceeds from excess in drinking; but from a poisonous quality supposed to be in the drink. Again, though *cast out* and *expel* be both good words, yet, if I am not deceived, the last would be the most proper word Gen. iii. 24. "So he *expelled* the man," &c. but, in the mouth of Sarah, Gen. xxi. 10. "*Cast out* that

“bond woman” seems to be a more eligible rendering. In short, that term is ever to be preferred, which is the most discriminately expressive of the particular idea, it is meant to convey.

Our last translators paid great attention to this sort of propriety; which gives uncommon beauty and energy to their style. They generally, indeed, preferred old English terms to recently imported ones*; and, at this day, they may appear to have sometimes carried that preference beyond due bounds: but we should consider, that 174 years are passed since their translation was made; and that many words are now grown familiar to us which were not then at all in use; while many others, that were then of the best usage, have gradually gone into disuse.

But it is not enough that the words be properly chosen; they must also be properly arranged, we are told that Addison was so scrupulously nice in this particular, that he would often alter a whole paper for the sake of a few misplaced particles. Be this as it may, it is certain that nothing contributes more to elegance than the apposite arrangement of words. “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth,” and “God created the heaven and the earth in the beginning,” are in reality composed of the same terms: but how flat is the last, which is Purver’s translation, com-

* Sometimes, however, they abandoned this mode of rendering without necessity, and even to the detriment of their version. Ezek. ix. 11. They translate “the man *reported* the matter” instead of “the man brought back word”; though the last be not only a more English, but also a more literal translation.

pared with the first, which is the common one? It is equal, as to the meaning, whether we say with Lookup: "They had served Chedorlaomer twelve years, and rebelled in the thirteenth," or with King James's translators, "Twelve years they had served Chedorlaomer, but in the thirteenth year they rebelled;" yet it will not, we presume, be denied that the latter is by far the most elegant mode of arrangement *.

With regard to meretricious ornaments, the strict mode of rendering which, those who have translated the Scriptures have generally prescribed to themselves, has luckily preserved them from falling into that defect: and this is, perhaps, the strongest argument that can be urged in favour of literal versions. The style of Pliny, Seneca, or even of Cicero might be clothed, with some degree of seeming propriety, in the English dress of a Stanhope, or Lestranger; but Caesar, Sallust, or Demosthenes would appear strangely metamorphosed in such a garb. Less still does the sacred Scripture admit of this sort of embellishment. The elegance that

* From an improper arrangement of words arises, not only inelegance, but often obscurity and sometimes a misapprehension of the translator's meaning. Instances of this are extremely frequent in Purver. But I shall present the reader with one from the common version. In Ezek. vi. 12. we find these words: "And thou shalt eat it as barley-cakes, and thou shalt bake it with dung that cometh out of a man, in their sight." By this arrangement it should seem, as if the dung were to come out of the man, in the sight of the people; nor does the comma after man, entirely remove the ambiguity: whereas, transpose the words thus, as they indeed stand in the original: "As barley-cakes thou shalt eat it, and with dung, that cometh from man, thou shalt bake it in their sight." The sense is plain and obvious, the turn, if I am not mistaken, less prosaical, and yet the translation more literal than before.

suits it is simple and unaffected; not the elegance of a court-lady decked out for a ball or birth-day, but that of rural beauty in her Sunday's apparel, modestly decorated with such flowers as grow in her native meads. The example of Castalio, whose greatest and almost only fault was an affectation to adorn his version with exotic finery, should be a powerful warning to all future translators, to avoid repeating an experiment that proved unsuccessful even in his hands. Compare his Latin version with that of Houbigant, or Harwood's English New Testament with the vulgar translation, and you will have a striking illustration of what I have here advanced.

A fourth quality of a good translation is as strict a uniformity of style and manner as is consistent with the other foregoing properties. It should not be close in one place and free in another; sometimes correct, and at other times careless; here, arrayed in the robes of a fashionable taste, and there, only covered with the rags of rusticity; much less must it appear a piece of patch work by different hands.

servetur ad imum

Qualis ab incepto processerit, et sibi constet.

It does not, however, hence follow, that the same words or even the same phrases should always, and without the least variation, be rendered in the same manner. Those critics, who have required this, have required too much. A compliance with so rigorous a law would often produce a translation not only unintelligible but

extremely erroneous. When Lookup, Gen. v. 1. translates "This" is the *roll* of the histories of Adam," he translates with some sort of propriety, because the Hebrew word there signifies a *narrative*, and narratives were commonly written on *rolls*: but when, Gen. xv. 5. he renders the same Hebrew term by the same vernacular one: "Look toward the *roll* of the stars," he gives to the word *roll* an acceptation of which it is not susceptible; and, perhaps, impresses a false idea on the mind of his reader. For who would imagine that *roll* here were the same as *number*; and not rather that it meant *rolling* or *rotation*? not to mention that the original word is in this place a verb, and well rendered in the common version, *tell*; still better by Bate, *number*.

It is, then, enough that the same word or phrase be, in the same circumstances and in the same acceptation, translated in the same manner: nor can this be considered as a hard restriction on the translator; for if he has once hit on a good term or mode of expression, why would he seek to change it merely for the sake of variety, at the risk of stumbling on a worse?

Yet this general uniformity in translating should not preclude a particular attention to that diversity of style which characterises the different Scripture-writers. This is a fifth quality of a good translation, which, however difficult to attain, ought certainly and by all means, to be aimed at. The historical parts of the Bible are not to be rendered in the same manner, as the poetical; nor these, as the

sentential. The stile of the book of Job is not the stile of Ifaiah, nor the stile of Ifaiah that of any other prophet. Every writer, whether sacred or profane, has something peculiar to himself, and it ought to be the endeavour of a translator to retain as much as possible of that peculiarity. He must, as Bishop Lowth finely expresses it, "imitate his features, his air, his gesture, and, as far as "the difference of language will permit, even his voice."

By this time the reader will be sufficiently prepared to draw this inference—That a good translation of the Bible is a most arduous task; and he will, probably, wonder at the resolution, or rashness, of that individual, who ventures singly to undertake it. Nor will his astonishment be lessened by viewing the following sketch of the necessary qualifications of a translator; which with a trembling hand I now venture to delineate.

A translator, then, must in the first place be well acquainted with the language from which, and the language into which he translates; and, for that purpose, must have made a long and serious study of both. It is even hard to say, to which of them he ought to have paid the greatest attention: so nearly balanced are the inconveniences that would ensue from inattention to either.

It is indeed natural enough to suppose that a due knowledge of that language, which we have been accustomed to speak from our infancy, would be much more easily acquired, than that of one, which we are obliged to learn, by the dint of memory, from books.

But that very facility with which we attain our mother-tongue in a certain degree of idiomatical propriety, is a real obstacle to our attaining it in perfection. We are too apt to imagine that he, who readily expresses himself, expresses himself well; and the negligences and even the solecisms of a familiar or provincial stile, will sometimes imperceptibly steal into our most elaborate compositions. There is no colloquial dialect perfectly pure: not that of the capital, not that of the court, not that of the college; and many expressions issue daily from the mouths of our most accurate and polite speakers, that would not bear the test of a severe criticism. A writer must, therefore, be continually on his guard against the obstruction of a low and vulgar phraseology, and weigh every word and sentence with grammatical skill and logical precision.

On the other hand the difficulty of learning a dead language is evident; especially of such a language as the Hebrew. The compositions in it are few, and incorrectly transmitted to us: the best lexicons are yet very imperfect: the signification of many words is extremely dubious, and their etymology very often equivocal. Hence he, who aspires at but a competent knowledge of it, must frequently have recourse to the other Oriental dialects; the grammar, vocabulary and genius of which he must, consequently, be well acquainted with.

All this is undoubtedly requisite in a translator of the Bible; but it is not all that is requisite. He must, moreover, be conver-

fant in Greek and Roman learning; by means of which, many passages of Scripture may be illustrated. Poets, philosophers, historians, philologists, geographers, naturalists—all ought to enter into his plan of reading; because from all he may, occasionally, derive advantage. Nor should modern travels, voyages and topographical descriptions escape his notice. In short he must be as much as possible a universal scholar; and if he be not so capacious a living library, as to retain all he has read; he should, at least, be able to recollect, where to seek what he immediately wants.

Yet the most profound erudition will not secure him success, if he be not also possessed of an acute penetration, a nice discernment, and a sure and delicate taste, formed on the best models of antiquity. The most of those who have given translations of the Bible were, as Michaelis observes * mere scholastic theologians; who explained the Scriptures according to the same dry methodical rules, by which they would have explained the Categories of Aristotle. They were even persuaded that philology had nothing to do with either logic or divinity. *Quanto eris melior grammaticus, said they, tanto peior dialecticus et theologus.* This ridiculous maxim was strongly urged against Reuchlin, Valla, Vives, Faber, Erasmus; and had, before, been urged, with equal ignorance and zeal, against St. Jerom. With regard to the interpretation of the Scriptures, the maxim might, perhaps, be inverted: *Quanto melior theologus, tanto*

* Praefat. in notas ad Lowth.

pejor interpretes. At any rate, one of the most essential qualifications of a good translator is to be a good grammarian; without which, all the theology of the Sorbonne will be of little use.

From what has been now said, it follows, as a necessary corollary; that a translator of the Bible should have a constitution to bear, and an inclination to undergo, assiduous and perseverant labour; a qualification too rarely conjoined with quickness of apprehension and elegance of taste. He must prosecute his always serious, often unengaging studies, with all the warm enthusiasm of a poet or painter; and yet with all the patient drudgery of a laborious mechanic. To pore, from morn to eve, on such a number of books, diversity of tongues and variety of figures, is enough to confuse the clearest intellects; and to deaden the perspicacity of the mental, as well as of the corporeal eye. If writing the dictionary of a single language be, as Scaliger thought, an adequate punishment for parricide; what crime may not be atoned for, by translating the Hebrew scriptures?

The last, but not least necessary, qualification of a translator is an honest impartiality. Whether that be absolutely attainable by any mortal, may be reasonably questioned: but no one will deny, that every possible endeavour should be made to attain it. Unwedded to systems of any kind, literary, physical or religious; a translator of the Bible should sit down to render his author, with the same indifference he would sit down to render Thucydides or

Xenophon. He should try to forget, that he belongs to any particular society of Christians; be extremely jealous of his most rational prepossessions; keep all theological consequences as far out of his sight as possible; and investigate the meaning of his original, by the rules only of a sound and sober criticism; regardless of pleasing or displeasing any party.

Some reader may here be disposed to ask: Are you possessed of all these qualifications? To this not unnatural question I beg leave to give an answer, somewhat similar to that which Cicero gives on a similar occasion; though on a different subject. Having described, with inimitable eloquence, the qualities of an accomplished orator, he modestly declares that he has given, rather an idea of what he conceived to be possible, than of what he ever expected to see. How much greater reason have I to acknowledge that my ideal portraiture of a good translator of the Bible is far beyond the reach of my own abilities.

To be still more explicit and ingenuous; although I have long endeavoured after the qualifications abovementioned, to affirm positively that I have actually acquired them all, or any one of them in an eminent degree, would be an unconscientious and rash assertion. In learning, genius and judgment I know myself to be inferior to many; some few may exceed me in diligence, assiduity and laboriousness; but in candor, impartiality and uprightness of intention I will yield to none.

It is on these more humble and subordinate qualifications that I principally rest my hopes of success; and it is, no doubt, chiefly owing to this part of my known character that my scheme has been so generally approved of. For although I belong to a religion that had been long proscribed, and is yet far from being popular in this country; and although my primary intention was to procure a tolerable version of the Holy Scriptures for the use of the British Catholics, the flattering and unexpected applause I have met with, in every part of the kingdom, from the learned of all communions, makes me hope that my work may be of more general utility than I at first imagined; and contribute more or less to promote Biblical knowledge over all the land.

To those who have encouraged me with their approbation, or aided me by their counsel; or who may, hereafter, be induced to do me the like good offices; I shall, in due time and place, make my thankful acknowledgments: but I cannot refrain, at present, from mentioning two or three persons, to whom I have had particular obligations.

The late Dr. Kennicott, on whose tomb every Biblical student ought annually to strew the tributary flower, has a peculiar claim to my grateful remembrance. I had hardly made known my design, when he anticipated my wishes to have his advice and assistance towards the execution of it, with a degree of unreserved frankness and friendship, which I had never before experienced in

a stranger. Not contented with applauding and encouraging himself, he pushed me forwards from my obscurity to the notice of others: he spoke of me to BARRINGTON; he introduced me to LOWTH. The very short time he lived, after my acquaintance with him, and the few opportunities I had of profiting from his conversation, are distressing reflexions; but still I count it a happiness to have been acquainted with a man, whose labours I have daily occasion to bless, and whose memory I must ever revere.

Another personage, to whom, if my work shall have any merit, the world will stand principally indebted for it, is the Right Honourable Lord PETRE; at whose request it was undertaken, and under whose patronage it is carried on. For although the plan itself is a plan of twenty years standing; and although the author had never any thing so much at heart as its accomplishment; yet his circumstances in life were such, as must have rendered that impossible, without the providential interposition of such a patron. But Lord PETRE is not only the Author's patron; he is in some respects the author. It was his great love for religion, and his extreme desire of seeing Scriptural knowledge more generally promoted among those of his own communion; that suggested to him the idea of procuring a new translation, before he knew that I had ever entertained a similar idea, and at a time when I had almost despaired of seeing it realized. His Lordship, I trust, will pardon me for inserting, without his knowledge, this public testimony of

his piety and munificence; which I could not suppress without violence to my own feelings; and which the public has, in some sort, a right to know.

Bp. Geddes of Edinburgh will, likewise, permit me to say, that his early and warm approbation of my plan made me undertake it with more alacrity and pursue it with greater ardour. His prudent advices and seasonable encouragement have often given a new stimulus to my spirits in the midst of my labours, and sometimes supported me under their almost oppressive load. I trust, from his long uninterrupted friendship, that he will continue the same good offices, until I shall have fairly discharged myself of the heavy burthen; and I foresee I shall yet stand in need of such good offices.

For although I can with pleasure affirm that all those who have hitherto taken the trouble to enquire into the nature of my design, and done me the honour to read my Prospectus while yet in manuscript, have approved of it, without reserve*; yet I am not so vain or foolish as to expect that I shall meet with no contradiction in the execution of it. That would be a fate more favourable than befel any of my predecessors in the same career: and I should think my work of little importance indeed, if it totally escaped censure.

* I take this occasion to return my warmest thanks to the Bishops of London and Salisbury, Dr. Goffet of London, Principal Robertson of Edinburgh, and Drs. Reid and Findlay of Glasgow; not only for the very favourable manner in which they have been pleased to speak of this Prospectus; but also for some valuable hints of improvement, to which, they will see, I have paid all due regard.

The systematic theologian, and such theologians there are in all communions, can relish no other mode of interpreting Scripture than that which suits with his own partial ideas; and every deviation from these will be by him accounted an unpardonable crime. Bigotry and zealotism will probably roar aloud at my moderation: the sciclist will write to shew that he can write; and envy, malignant envy, has sometimes been seen pursuing objects even as mean as me.

I hope I have a sufficient stock of philosophy and religion to bear even the disappointments that arise from unsuccessfulness in literary pursuits; which I believe to be among the most severe of all disappointments. I only wish not to be judged and condemned without a fair trial. When my translation shall be once published, it will be the Public's as much as mine, and every one will have a right to form what judgment he pleases of it: but until then I earnestly request all Christians in general, and those of my own persuasion in particular, "Not to judge before the time;" nor even then without due examination. My plan is now before them. Let critics point out its defects, and suggest improvements with candor and charity. I will pay attention to their remarks, their admonitions, their strictures; and I promise to

Make use of ev'ry friend and ev'ry foe

towards the rendering of my work less unworthy of the public favour.

For the rest, I am not only well pleased to have it thought, but extremely anxious to have it said and known, that, as a translator,

I am addicted to no particular system; nor guided by any principles but the rules of translating well.

If to future translators I may not be able to exhibit a model of taste and elegance, I flatter myself I shall set them no common example of religious moderation. It is certainly the interest, and ought to be the concern, of both Catholics and Protestants, to have their common Code as pure and genuine as possible; and their only contest, in this respect, should be, which shall do most to clear it from every sort of corruption. To despise the labours of another, because he is of a different country or creed, is unworthy of a rational being; and contrary to the practice of the best Christian writers of antiquity. Origen was so far from depreciating the works of those, who were not of his own communion, that he joined, in the same volume, the versions of Jews and reputed Heretics, with that which the Church used: and St. Jerom, profiting of his collection, made no scruple to borrow from all of them, as he saw occasion.

It is, indeed, from the united studies of the learned of all communions, that we can ever hope to bring the Scriptures to that degree of purity and perfection, of which they are yet susceptible; and it is with infinite pleasure we perceive that the learned themselves begin to be of this sentiment. The labours of a Houbigant, a Villhoison, a Georgi and a Rossi are as much prized and applauded at London, Leipfick and Goettengen, as those of a Lowth,

a Kennicott and a Michaelis are at Paris, Parma and Rome: and if the present taste for Oriental learning continue to be diffused, we may soon reasonably look for, at least, as perfect and impartial editions and translations of the Hebrew classics, as we already have of the Greek and Latin.

I have laid before the Public the nature and end of my undertaking, the difficulties I had to encounter and the means I have used to overcome them, the dangers I had to fear and the cautions I have taken to shun them, the helps I have had, the guides I have chiefly followed, the mode of translation I have adopted, the method I have pursued, and the rules I have prescribed to myself in the prosecution of my plan: and, now, I look forward, with no small anxiety, to that critical day, when the work itself must be submitted to the examination of the same formidable tribunal, from whose decrees it is in vain for any author to appeal. To be sure of succeeding, would be arrogance; to despond, pusillanimity. My hopes are at least equal to my fears; and as long as the balance is but equally poised, I will persevere in holding it.

Should I even fail in the execution of so vast a project, there is some consolation in thinking that I have, in the opinion of good judges, pointed out the right way to success. My Prospectus, I am told, may serve as a general chart to younger and more unexperienced students in divinity, who may chuse to embark in the same perilous voyage. I have delineated with precision the track which

I judged the safest for them to pursue, indicated the principal landmarks that should direct their course, fixed buoys and beacons wherever I thought there was need, and warned them of such rocks and shallows as they run the greatest risk of making shipwreck upon. Should my own little vessel be, notwithstanding, dashed to pieces, let it be imputed to the unskilfulness of the pilot, not to the impracticability of the passage; and serve only to encrease the wariness and vigilance of the next navigator, without diminishing his intrepidity and spirit of enterprize.

By some, perhaps, it may be expected that I should here give a specimen of my translation and of the form it is to appear in. But, besides that this last is not yet exactly determined, a sketch of the version itself would be but a fallacious criterion, by which to pass a judgment either favourable or unfavourable. I shall be always ready to communicate my ideas and labours to the learned of every denomination, who may do me the honour to interest themselves in my undertaking, and shall pay every sort of due attention to their observations or advice: but I see no reason for gratifying idle curiosity, or malignant censoriousness, by a premature and partial publication. I will, however, subjoin a short notice of the general oeconomy of the work, and so conclude a Prospectus, that by some may, possibly, be deemed already too long.

Although the new version be made from a corrected text of the original, the present printed copies are never departed from, with-

out a special notation. The additions, omissions, transpositions and variations are all distinguished by respective symbols, and supported by corresponding authorities.

The text of the version will be divided into new and more natural sections, the number and contents of which will be printed on the outer margin: but the old division of chapters and verses will, for the reasons abovementioned, be retained, and marked in the inner margin.

The correctional references, various readings, and explanatory notes, will be at the bottom of the page; the critical annotations at the end of the volume.

A new comparative Chronology will accompany every principal transaction, and be expressed in years before Christ, at the top of the page.

With regard to the concordantial references, or parallel passages, with which the margins of our Bibles are crowded; those of them only will be retained that are manifestly real: for the greater number are only distant, and often arbitrary, allusions.

To every Volume, and for the most part to every Book, will be prefixed a particular Preface; in which a compendious critical account will be given of its real or supposed author, its subject, stile and character, and the rank it holds among the Hebrew scriptures in the Jewish and Christian canons.

The whole of the Old Testament will, as far as can be yet con-

jectured, be comprised in four volumes. The first will contain the Pentateuch and its supplement the Book of Joshua; the second, the rest of the Historical Books in their natural order; the third, the *Hagiographa*; and the fourth, the Prophets. To these it is intended to add a fifth, which, if properly executed, would be an useful introduction to the other four. Beside a general Preface and Indexes, it should contain the discussion of a great number of questions relative to the Hebrew scriptures; their antiquity, authenticity, inspiration, &c. many of which still appear to be susceptible of farther elucidation.

As soon as the First Volume shall be ready for the press, due notice will be given of the time and terms of publication; as likewise at what particular periods the following volumes may be expected.

I have now only to request the learned, into whose hands this Prospectus may come, to favour me with their remarks and strictures on such parts of it as they may think defective or improveable. And if they will, moreover, be so kind as to transmit to me their own observations on any difficult passage of Scripture, I shall consider it as a singular obligation, and make a public acknowledgement of it. Any communications of this kind may be directed to the Author in Maddox Street, or to his Bookseller, R. Faulder, in Bond Street, London.

T H E E N D.